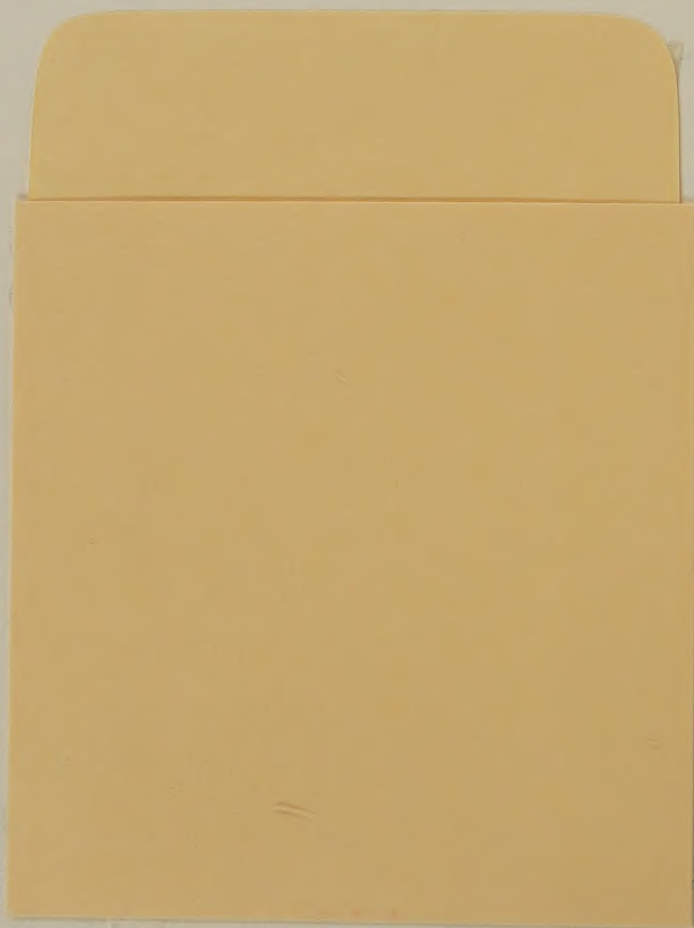


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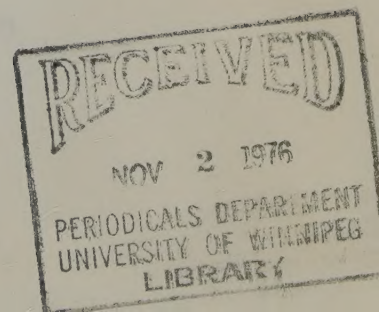
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of
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Two Numbers ☉ 1921-1922

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EDITORIAL.

BETWEEN the first and second number of the *Tyro* a longer time has elapsed than was intended ; and no fixed date can be assigned, in any case, for its appearances. Roughly, we aim at four numbers a year. But more, of a restricted size, may be produced ; or the material may be made up into a bulkier format, as in the present number, brought out less frequently. The price at which the paper is sold must depend on the size. Under these circumstances, it is impossible to quote a figure for a year's subscription. The present subscribers will receive the present number, which must be regarded as two numbers, and the succeeding number, of whatever dimension, whatever sold at, when it appears. This has seemed to us a fair arrangement, seeing the new and enlarged form that the paper has taken.

The objects of the paper remain the same as announced in the first number ; it is under the same control. More *Tyro* satires will make their appearance in the following number. Communications will be welcomed from those interested in the painting and general movement this paper supports, for publication or otherwise. The Editor wishes to get into touch with anyone in the country with whom he is not acquainted, by letters or personally, who shares these interests.

The only Tyros this number contains are Bestre, and X and F, and they written about and not shown graphically. This absence of tyronic images is in order to have a full display in this number of pictures and drawings by London artists of experimental tendency, such work being entirely unrepresented in the larger exhibitions or art periodicals.

The next number will contain more Tyro drawings.

A PREAMBLE FOR THE USUAL PUBLIC.

The present number of this paper contains, as regards the pictures reproduced, a large majority of radical experimental work. The question will arise naturally to what extent the European movement that these things typify has succeeded, how the war has affected it, and what its future may be. During the last ten years, at regular intervals, writers and people in conversation have said : " Cubism, Futurism, Vorticism, and all the rest of that revolutionary phase of art, is dead." Whenever a picture dealer, who had been a courageous supporter of this movement, has failed, or appeared

to be failing, or whenever a painter conspicuously associated with this movement has exhibited pictures of a more usual tendency, the same thing has been confidently announced. A great innovating movement is not, however, so easily destroyed. The quality of its vitality is certain to be so much truer and harder than that of its multitudes of opponents, that the world would have to penetrate further into chaos than it has done, or is likely to be allowed to go, to make such manifestations impossible.

Also, if you contrast it with the modes of expression that depend for their existence on the precarious remains of a past order of society and life, you will see that, depending as this other one does on a mentality in course of formation, whose roots, literally, are in the future, its chances of survival are better than its more immediately traditional rivals. Yet those voices that are repeatedly raised announcing the decease of this troublesome innovation, are always gladly acclaimed. Everyone (or rather the great majority of the educated public) would welcome the disappearance of something that wounds their vanity, because it is not a thing that can be readily assimilated by their intelligence ; which does not reach their sentimental nature ; and which does not appeal to them commercially. Regarding the last point, they reflect that it is hardly likely that such " freaks " will ever find people more responsive than the public in front of them to-day. They say, with an appearance of justice : " Art is an expression of life. I live, and there are millions like me. These so-called pictures mean nothing to me. It may be good mathematics or good engineering, but it is not *art*. Art expression is always based on our general susceptibility to *beauty*. There is nothing that I recognize as beauty in these things."

These things do not contain, it is true, the perfumes of the songs of Hafiz, the ineffable human gracefulness of Botticelli, the athletic youthful perfection of Greek sculpture. That is what is usually indicated by the word " beauty." But nor does Signorelli's nightmare of the damned ; nor Rembrandt's heavy burghers and their wives ; nor Goya's witches ; nor Daumier's laundresses. The " beauty " objection is really easily overcome. (I think that an abstract design may contain, in every sense, the flowering of beauty. But as this would merely hold us up on a difficultly elucidated point, we will ignore it.)

The next objection that I must meet will run somewhat as follows. " You mention Rembrandt's burghers. They were at

least immediate and understandable images. They were *realism*. They meant something to everybody."

"Realism" it may be well to interpolate, as it is used in popular art criticism, is a fine manly practical word that appeals to everyone as safe and satisfactory. After having been annoyed by some form of art remote from their daily city or bridge experience, they fall back with relief and defiance upon it. It thus sounds the call of sane-and-no-high-brow nonsense for them, affording them promise of things as immediately appetizing and as easily assimilated as the Sunday newspapers' murder or divorce tales, or speculation on a beauty competition. Art, however, the greatest art, even, has it in its power to influence everybody. Actually the shapes of the objects (houses, cars, dresses and so forth) by which they are surrounded have a very profound subconscious effect on people. A man might be unacquainted with the very existence of a certain movement in art, and yet his life would be modified directly if the street he walked down took a certain shape, at the dictates of an architect under the spell of that movement, whatever it were. Its forms and colours would have a tonic or a debilitating effect on him, an emotional value. Just as he is affected by the changes of the atmosphere, without taking the least interest in the cyclonic machinery that controls it, so he would be directly affected by any change in his physical milieu.

A man goes to choose a house. He is attracted by it or not, often, not for sentimental or practical reasons, but for some reason that he does not seek to explain, and that yet is of sufficient force to prevent him from, or decide him on, taking it. This is usually an example of the functioning of the æsthetic sense (however undeveloped it may be in him) of which we are talking. The painting, sculpture and general design of to-day, such as can be included in the movement we support, aims at nothing short of a physical reconstruction and reordering of the visible part of our world. Pretentious as this assertion sounds, it is an aim that appears to many of us as feasible as it is necessary, and it has not had its birth in an æsthetic megalomania, any more than in the volcano of political revolution. The way the effect of a painter's or sculptor's vision works is this. Every educated man in any age must acquaint himself and know a certain amount about the innovations in art, science and so on that are in progress. According to the susceptibility of the individual, when, if he is an architect, for example, or

an engineer, he comes to carry out some commission, you will find that certain things will enter into his design which would not have been there if he had not acquainted himself in that way with contemporary thought. To take a smaller example, the posters on the hoardings and in the tubes to-day would not be quite what they are (the same applies to the designs on the magazine covers, caricatures, advertisements) if painters and draughtsmen in their studios had not done paintings (principally of apples and mandolines too!) of a certain type, during these last ten years.

The result is *never* (in art as in politics) the equivalent in intensity of the ideal implied in the work of the original mind. But great changes are produced, accompanied by their attendant human compromise.

When people assert, therefore, that the movement in painting about which I am writing, is *dead*, you only have to ask yourself what is going to take its place, and you see the unreality of the position occupied by the speaker. *You* may want everything but bridge, dancing, whiskey and the Novel Magazine to end to-morrow; and you may even be fool enough to pay a man to write that for you in your daily paper. But you will not have to reflect very much to see that as life has never been confined to those things, but always outsped the jazz, overflowed the whiskey, and transcended intellectually the Novel Magazine, that there is a good chance of its always doing so. It is in fact precisely as impossible to destroy Einstein, a picture of a mandoline by Picasso, or Marcel Proust, as it would be to exterminate bridge, Johnny Walker and the rest of that.

So then, if you succeed even in destroying one abstruse and tiresome phenomenon, another one instantly will pop up in its place. And as our time is crystallizing more or less, the new phenomenon will, round about these centuries, present a distressing resemblance to the last.

For example, at this moment suppose we say that all this disagreeable Vorticism and Cubism is at an end. What do you expect is going to be there in its place? Nothing but photographic portraits of interminable beauties, never-ending slap-dash gypsies, the monarch laying a foundation stone, a mother (terribly anxious "to be like" a mother) washing a baby that is resolved to be a baby for ever and at all costs? Or shall we all return to Degas (whom we have recently

seen at a London Gallery): return to Rodin, taking Gauguin on the way? Or shall we go slowly and historically back, beginning with the nineties, and passing slowly through the reign of Queen Victoria, till we arrive (with a sigh) on the fringes of the dark ages? Would it not be better to develop a plastic art in harmony with the innovations (that is the living existence, merely) of science and political thought, which is, in our time, real enough? Is not *our* reality not alone the motor-buses where there were once sedan chairs, soft felt hats where there were black chimney pots, but also what our age politically and intellectually is struggling towards: its "beliefs" in what we do not possess, and disgusts with what we have, as well as the accidents of our moment? If, as a reply to all this, I get an answer, "Yes, you need not return to the French Impressionists, or our own later Tonks or Steer, nor the Blue Boy nor the White Girl. But *must* you do these abstract things?" Then I should say: "Would you *really* understand a Gainsborough or a Whistler any more than an 'abstract' canvas? If nature had bestowed on you some terrific dose of native honesty, would you not have to admit, that, apart from a snobbish working-up and stimulation, the Blue Boy was neither better nor worse for you (although worse if anything) than an enlarged photograph would be of the same blue-clad lad? And that being so, would it be desirable (practical questions apart) for a painter to abandon a deep enthusiasm, and promise to satisfy you in the way that a photograph could?"

To that you would no doubt reply—I am assuming that we have not arrived at the stage where you say "Do anything you damned well please!"—"But what then *is* an artist, if he is not an individual who gives pleasure or does *something* to somebody except specialists of his own craft?"

Well, I do not for my part believe that *any painter or sculptor has been understood, ever, by anyone except a painter or a sculptor*: any more than the astronomical mathematics with which Einstein plays are to be understood by anyone but a specialist in that branch of mathematics. Specialists in the art of painting, sculpture and architecture were naturally given the job of building Buru Budur, or a temple at Thebes, or Chartres. The artists performed those tasks superbly, unnecessarily superbly from the point of view of taste, perfection of workmanship, and value for money. Once the job was handed over to them, got into their hands, another thing came into play. The people, and their rulers, were thinking of

some great abstraction ; not luckily at the moment of their own domestic æsthetic, with the result that the unnecessarily noble achievement was acclaimed. And certain periods have possessed a fervour, dignity and honesty that ours can hardly boast ; and there would, in such a period, be something in the æsthetically unenlightened mass that responded to the endeavour of the artist.

To return for a moment to the substitute for our present European movement away, so far away, from representative truth. "Representative" painting (with luck, of a good type) must always exist. The painter's function of putting a bonhomme on canvas is too fundamental a one to lapse ; no other form of artist, except the camera, can take his place. And he will always out-point the camera. There is no reason why such work of even the highest conceivable type should not co-exist with a great output of experimental work of all sorts, more specialized and more scientific, in which intenser field the æsthetic incubation of a new mentality could be achieved. Why should not the Royal Academy practitioner, to his enduring benefit, perhaps, work out his yearly Burlington House masterpiece in cubist or expressionist form first ? A provincial mayor might be greatly impressed in watching the evolution of the ultimate rosy photograph from the cylindrical and egg-like shapes that first made their appearance on the canvas.

A painter's sketch, some rough affair with the forms indicated rather than achieved, has always had a fascination for people, other than painters ; and an "impressionistic bit of work" has had for a good many years its appeal to a public that soon got over the shock of seeing pictures exhibited that were not really "finished" (Monet, Degas, Manet and their followers and successors). This fascination appears to me to be of a fundamental sort. People feel that the polished, pretentiously completed work may lack some "charm" (and is not that the same as "beauty") that the shorthand of the sketch possesses. This is not a legitimate, but may it not be an easy way, developing this feeling a few stages farther, to the understanding of "abstract" art ?

Still, you will say, I have not answered the question, "Why *abstract* paintings ? Why not variations on Manet, Gainsborough, Raphael, such as are indicated by an absence of demand for Madonnas, great difference in contemporary dress, social style and so forth, without such a radical cutting adrift from the normal visual understanding as is implied in a Vorticist, Cubist or Impressionist picture ?"

My answer to that will be found in another section of the paper. There I have begun an essay which I hope to continue in subsequent numbers of the *Tyro*, and in which I have set out to elucidate fully the points popularly raised in this preamble, and to assemble my views of the objective of plastic art in our time.

RECENT PAINTING IN LONDON.

The Finance Expert.

The landscape of art in London has not much changed since the appearance of the first number of the *Tyro*. A few structures damaged by the war have been still further repaired; the usual graceful floraisons have occurred. Otherwise the profoundest lethargy prevails, only broken by the bickerings between soap-lords and canvas-knights (not to be confounded with carpet-knights). There are the usual French Impressionist shows (French dealers have such large stocks of these masters, and they must be cleared; reference, *Esprit Nouveau*). The London Group has had an exhibition, and called in the services of an illustrious professional economist.

The London Group has grown into a large miscellaneous collection of the younger painters of "modern" tendency. I have no quarrel with most of these painters; there are friends of mine amongst them and several whose work I admire. But that unfortunate organization of amateurs—banded together to the ends and for the decrepit joys of amateurishness—that men call, for want of a better word, Bloomsburies, infect this healthy but rather too large society. The instinct of the weak and foolish to get very close to each other has functioned in them to perfection; they are a little society of inseparables; they drift up the street hand in hand and wide-eyed, while Mr. Clive Bell curvets in front of them, turns somersaults and cracks jokes with the passers-by (everybody passes by!). There are too many of these unfortunates in the London Group not to give that exhibition the appearance of a "Bloomsbury" show.

The financial expert called in proved to the public, in the catalogue, that if they bought a Bloomsbury picture to-day for two and sixpence, they might find someone fool enough to pay five shillings for it twenty years hence—if trade had revived by that time. I may have got the figures a little wrong, but this was the sense of it. Which extremely brilliant example of imaginative finance is credited with having swept off their feet a certain number of people to the tune of a few pounds. All of which enables one to predict what the

catalogue of the art exhibition of the future will be like. Everything but "pure commerce" (to pair with pure painting) will be banned. Several economic experts may be called in, to get the thing right to a halfpenny. Pencil and notebook in hand, amid masses of figures, the small and Bateman-like purchaser of the future will stand. Before risking a rather large sum (say £2 10s. od.) on such a thing as an oil-painting, he will have acquired the habit of expecting exhaustive information as to the expense involved in painting the picture, the financial record of similar pictures during the preceding century, and predictions from an accredited art finance expert. Thus, if it is winter, so much for R.S. and C.'s silkstone, or the best anthracite nuts, to warm for five-and-a-half hours the anæmic sitter immobilized for the purposes of the imitation; $\frac{2}{2}$ an hour for professional immobilization, or if the sitter's motive is to be classed as love, vanity or weakmindedness, then $\frac{3}{4}$ all told must be allowed for *Rich Tippy Pekoe* to soothe her, and at least 2/- for sunset 888 cigarettes. So much for mixed flax and cotton, extra for all flax, canvas, round £2 3s. 6d., that is 3ft. 2in. by 3ft. 10in. Pigment roughly 17/-; wear of eleven hog brushes $\frac{8}{3}$; studio rent for one week, wear of breeches on part of artist, statistics of Christie sales, tips of the market as it affects this particular picture, and so forth. A strong advertising note might be employed by some experts. "If you are a small man with a small purse, *these* are the pictures for you. They are *not* much to look at. But then neither are you. Yet who knows, some day you may occupy an honoured place in an empire (you know which I mean—upon which the sun never sets); you may even become a finance expert—who can tell?—and this poor bedraggled ugly brown little mud-pie, which is in reality a picture and a very good one at that, may also some day find itself hanging side by side with Grecos, Gainsboroughs and Carusos and all the Kings, Prime Ministers and Emperors of the palette. Buy! Buy! Buy! I say to you, buy. You will never regret it. You may live to bless this day. Plank down the ready and this elegant picture is yours, conveyed to your private address, at the end of the exhibition."

I suggest, before it is too late, that painters exhibit their pictures with notes, if the dealers require them, on the intellectual motives of the particular adventure they are engaged on; but that they eschew the methods of the boot firm or cigar importer, as it is not likely to help them particularly.

The Editor.

THE THREE PROVINCIALITIES.

IT has been perceptible for several years that not one but three English literatures exist : that written by Irishmen, that written by Americans, and that composed by the English themselves. Thirty years ago Irish and English literature were in a state of partial amalgamation. That is to say, the literary movement in England was very largely sustained by Irishmen ; for some years, otherwise on the whole rather barren years, the depleted English ranks were filled by Irishmen. English literature lacked the vitality to assimilate this foreign matter ; and, more recently, in accord with political tendencies, Irish writers (mostly of minor importance) have re-assembled in Dublin. There remain, as a permanent part of English literature, some of the poetry of Yeats, and more doubtfully the plays of Synge (probably too local for permanence). As for the future, it may be predicted that the work of Mr. Joyce should arrest the separate Irish current, for the reason that it is the first Irish work since that of Swift to possess absolute European significance. Mr. Joyce has used what is racial and national and transmuted it into something of international value ; so that future Irish writers, measured by the standard he has given, must choose either to pursue the same ideal or to confess that they write solely for an Irish, not for a European public. No more comic peasants, epic heroes, banshees, little people, Deirdres ; Mr. Joyce has shown them up. Mr. James Stephens (I think it was) in a recent number of the *Outlook* advocated that Irish writers should return to the Irish language. In that case, there will be no further need to discuss Irish literature at all.

American literature, in contrast to Irish, has not yet received this death blow from a native hand. Owing to the fact that America possesses a much greater number (even making full allowance for the difference of population) of able second order writers than England, its " national literature " is extremely flourishing. If it has produced nothing of European importance it nevertheless counts a considerable number of intelligent writers ; has several literary critics more alert and openminded than any of their generation in this country ; and some of its poets and novelists at least admire respectable ideals, and tend towards the light. The advance of " American literature " has been accelerated by the complete collapse of literary effort in England. One may even say that the present situation here has

now become a scandal impossible to conceal from foreign nations ; that literature is chiefly in the hands of persons who may be interested in almost anything else ; that literature presents the appearance of a garden unmulched, untrimmed, unweeded, and choked by vegetation sprung only from the chance germination of the seed of last year's plants.

It is a sign of the poverty and blindness of our criticism that in all three countries a mistaken attitude toward nationality has unconsciously arisen or has been consciously adopted. The point is this : literature is not primarily a matter of nationality, but of language ; the traditions of the language, not the traditions of the nation or the race, are what first concern the writer. The Irish radicals are commendable in so far as they mark the necessity for a choice. Ireland must either employ a language of its own or submit to international standards. It is immaterial, from my point of view, whether English literature be written in London, in New York, in Dublin, in Indianapolis, or in Trieste. In fifty years time it may all make its appearance in Paris or in New York. But so far as it is literature of the first order, not merely an entertaining side-show, it will be English literature. Should America in time develop a superior language (as Ireland may try to revert to a more barbarous one) there would be a separate American literature—contingent, probably, upon the disappearance or sufficient degeneration of the English language in England.

Every literature has two sides ; it has that which is essential to it as literature, which can be appreciated by everyone with adequate knowledge of the language, and on the other hand it has that which can only be enjoyed by a particular group of people inhabiting a particular portion of the earth. As in the end *adequate* knowledge of the language means *complete* knowledge, and as *no* person can ever have the opportunity to acquire complete knowledge of any language but his own, it is easy to confuse the two appreciations. For those who have the best opportunity for knowing the language are precisely this particular group in a particular portion of the earth. The critic is the person who has the power to distinguish between the two points of view in himself ; and to discern what, in any work of literary art, takes its place, through its expression of the genius of its own language, in European literature, and what is of purely local importance. (In the case of such a writer as Dickens, for example, this dissociation remains to be performed).

English literature at the present time suffers as much, I think, as that written in America, from this pleasant provinciality. (How much contemporary verse, for instance, appeals rather to the Englishman's love of English rustic scenery than to a universal perception of Nature, such as Wordsworth *rarely* attained). And how tardy, and still how deficient, has been the English appreciation of one of the greatest and least local: Edgar Poe. The lesson of language, therefore, is one to be learned on both sides of the Atlantic. (The statement of this fact places the author, as M. Cocteau might say, in the position of Calchas in "Troilus and Cressida"). Whatever words a writer employs, he benefits by knowing as much as possible of the history of these words, of the *uses to which they have already been applied*. Such knowledge facilitates his task of giving to the word a new life and to the language a new idiom. The essential of tradition is in this; in getting as much as possible of the whole weight of the history of the language behind his word. Not every good writer need be conscious of this—I do not know to what extent Mr. Wyndham Lewis has studied Elizabethan prose—Mr. Joyce at least has not only the tradition but the consciousness of it. The best writers will always produce work which will not be American or Irish or English, but which will take its predestined place in "English literature." It is a pity, however, that the second-best writers, for want of a little critical breadth of view, should insist, out of national vanity or mere unconscious complacency, on what will render them only completely insupportable to posterity. The British writer, who shrinks from working overtime or at weekends, will not find these ideas congenial. Nor, for other reasons, will all American critics.

T. S. Eliot.

ABSTRACT PAINTING AND SOME ANALOGIES.

A SERIOUS stumbling-block to anything like a general understanding of abstract painting seems to be its innocence of function. The enquirer will readily allow the artist's right to conceive fantasies of form, but when explanation reaches the stage of claiming for such fantasies a peculiar beauty of invention, or contrivance, it is apt to be countered by the assertion that a painting is not a machine.

Now it is true that our special sense of the beauty of machines is involved with a general sense of their function. We admire the hull of a yacht, the streamline of a motor-car or the cambered wings of an aeroplane, as indeed we admire the supple lines of a racehorse, partly at least because of their aptness for speed. Every engineer knows that machines gain in sightliness as their efficiency increases, and it has become almost a commonplace in æsthetics where architecture and the design of articles in common use are concerned that utility brings with it its own reward of beauty. A fireplace or a pocket pencil are pleasing to the eye in direct proportion to their efficiency.

In pictorial art invention and function are apparently unrelated, and many people find it difficult to imagine one without the other. What sense is there, they ask, in describing an abstract painting as inventive? Why invent a thing that won't "work"? Well, there is a perfectly good answer to that. Inventiveness in an abstract painting *does* work—on the mind and imagination of the spectator who is sensitive to formal design. Its function is imaginative. Only in a literal sense is function irrelevant as a criterion of abstract art. Only in a literal sense is it valid as a criterion of machines, because machines are constructed to translate power into movement. Perfect adaptability of movement is the controlling motive of their design. But where, as in the inventions of abstract art, the motive is purely static, there is no longer any question of function in the mechanical sense at all. They function on a different plane.

Abstract painting is the creation of our own times, and it is reasonable to conclude that those who are most intemperate in denouncing it are the least sensitive to the prodigal confusion of abstract

forms in the midst of which they move and have their being. Appreciation of abstract design, whether this be organised consciously, as in a painting, or at hazard, as in the panorama of the streets or countryside, demands a degree of sensitiveness which is far from being general. It is extremely difficult to form any opinion as to the extent to which the average man is sensitive to design. Complete immunity from its influence is probably rare, though most people are ignorant of its physical and mental reactions because their faculties of perception have become automatic through lack of conscious exercise. Mean architecture may exert a depressing influence on many who have never asked themselves the question whether it is mean or not. Most public monuments and thoroughfares must be endemic centres of depression from which the individual only succeeds in protecting himself by virtue of a happy propensity for passing by without looking, or looking without deliberately registering an impression.

Conscious susceptibility to chance arrangements of form and outline being so rare, it is not surprising that the deliberate contrivances of abstract art appear meaningless to many who are by no means insensitive to more complex kinds of art, and who, for this very reason, are the less inclined to tolerate what they cannot understand. In a picture full of poetic allusion or of obvious reference to common visual experience, the element of pure design is only too readily overlooked or taken for granted as something of quite subordinate importance. The artist is freely credited with attachment to ideas which might be expressed otherwise than pictorially; sensitiveness to interrelations of form and colour for their own sake passes unrecognised, or is esteemed an insufficient motive either for creation or appreciation.

It follows quite naturally that a form of art which flouts the general desire for information, comment, description, &c., becomes an intellectual bugbear. Neither art (as A. has known art), nor sense (as B. can perceive it), it is deemed a mockery, an exasperating offence. Cubists and others have, it must be admitted, too often made understanding unnecessarily difficult by labelling their inventions with inapposite titles, or at any rate with titles whose relevance ceased with the inception of the design. It is irritating, and may be misleading, to call an arbitrary arrangement of forms, bearing no resemblance to recognisable objects, "Mandolines and Glasses" or "A Portrait of Madame X." The mandolines doubtless exist, and

so, indeed, may Madame X, but those who try to find them in the picture look in vain, and because their natural curiosity is frustrated, accuse the artist of making fun of them. It becomes difficult to persuade such people of the complicity of the mandolines or the lady in the picture at all—they are like the unnecessary allusions in a conundrum, added, as the joker says, “to make it more difficult.” Yet if there be one obvious fact in abstract art, it is surely the discrepancy between the affirmations of ordinary vision and the entirely novel structural reality conceived by the artist. This is the initial challenge which the spectator is asked to accept; the artist’s right to complete freedom of design, or, to be more precise, of invention.

Fortunately for the artist, no manifestation of the spirit is ever born in a vacuum. However original his artistic consciousness, the artist is never completely isolated. Not everyone confronted by an abstract painting asks, “What is it? What does it represent? How do you explain it?” There is, in truth, nothing to explain except that it is an invention, a contrivance, an effort of construction and arrangement—in short, a new organism existing and appealing in its own right. Explanation may clear away misconceptions as to the nature of abstract art, and thus place the spectator in a position whence he may contemplate it directly without suffering the impediment of extraneous ideas and preconceptions. But more than this it cannot do. Those who are naturally impervious to the music of form, and those others who misprize it unless combined with a more complex form of appeal, are not to be won by explanation.

Why is it, then, that music, in nature the most conspicuously abstract of the arts, presents no noticeable difficulties, in its simpler forms at any rate, to the normal intelligence? Or to put the question in a form dispensing with any need of qualification, why is the abstract nature of music universally accepted? The analogy of music has been adduced in nearly every attempt to justify the practice of abstract painting, but it cannot be said to have convinced the hostile or indifferent majority, in spite of the admitted fact that music is, essentially, an arrangement of abstract sounds. The analogy would be more persuasive were it not for the associations with ulterior ideas which are found in nearly all popular music, as indeed they are found in all popular paintings, and which are considered by so many music lovers as the more significant part of the whole. To most people music does not appeal solely, or even mainly, as an arrangement of abstract sounds. Its appeal is linked with literature, as in

song ; with movement, as in the dance ; with illustration, as in programme-music. So confused is the issue that musical criticism abounds to-day in controversies as to whether music written for the ballet can be conceived as having a separate existence ; or whether music written round, or ascribed by programme annotation to a literary theme, has any *raison d'être* as an entity, if the association of ideas be ignored. Nevertheless it is perfectly clear that thousands of concert-goers attain complete enjoyment of music without the aid of programme notes or other alleged aids to musical understanding.

Nor are all arrangements of sound purely abstract, or, to put it more accurately, certain arrangements of sound, produced by certain instruments, recall to the mind scenes of action which are associated with them by tradition, e.g. wind instruments and hunting calls, heraldic summonses or fanfares ; or suggest associations of idea, e.g. the minor key and melancholy. It would be easy to multiply instances drawn from the physical associations of time measures, and from the endless possibilities of onomatopœia. To many people the " motives " of Wagner have become so familiar that music appears to-day as the key to teaming treasure houses of mythology ; it is forgotten that Wagner invented these motives, and that the significance he ascribed to them was arbitrary. Yet there are forms of musical composition, such as the symphonic, which are popular notwithstanding the fact that they are pure abstract music.

Scrutiny of the problem in this aspect soon brings the enquirer back to his original sense of inconsistency. The analogy of music is ingenious and true up to a point : it sets the mind in the right direction by throwing a clear light on the nature of abstract painting, at the same time justifying it theoretically. But it is incomplete, and analysis, as it penetrates more deeply, discovers other elements in the appeal of music which are implicit and essential, and which painting does not share in anything like the same degree. Music, even in its most abstract, its purest form, plays directly upon the emotions with a force far transcending the emotional appeal of any other art. A beating of tom-toms, a blast upon the horn, are not only a summons, but an incitement, corresponding directly in rhythm and impact with the answering pulse and temper of the blood ; exciting or appeasing the delicate organism of mood, both in the individual and in the mass. Music is, and always has been, inseparable from emotional disturbance, ranging from exaltation in its grandest forms

to the commonest reflexes, physical as well as mental. The more primitive the community, the more distinctly is music of various kinds associated with recurring phases of life ; the call to battle, the ceremonial of victory, the ecstasy of thanksgiving or the fearful abasement of propitiation, the beguiling strains of peace and luxury. Music, in fact, speaks a language of emotion which nearly everyone can, in some measure, comprehend.

Abstract painting, too, speaks a language of emotion, but the emotion which responds to it is calm and contemplative. The emotion called up by a picture, abstract or other, is contained, and the intellect plays its part because the spectator's pleasure in the harmonious arrangement of forms is increased by admiration of the ingenuity of the artist's contrivance. There is a further distinction between the appeal of music and painting in that music has a real dynamic quality ; its pattern is not static, like that of a painting, but is forever in movement. Moreover, every instrument has its peculiar timbre, almost, indeed, its own emotional province.

Abstract pictorial art is only the invention of our own time in the sense that never in the past has painting depended solely on the appeal of pure form. The art of painting has in the past relied upon a greater complexity of idiom, and it would be just as foolish to claim that abstract art is an ultimate development as to say that the appeal of abstract arrangement is absent from the work of the old masters. All great works of art, of whatever place or period, contain pure elements of formal design without which their other qualities could not exist. We are now emerging from a period of artistic lassitude, both in France and England, when art dropped to the lowest depths of imbecility, and pedantic painters flattered vulgar sentiment and false culture by confusing " classicism " with tradition. Abstract painting is more traditional than the classicism or romanticism of our fathers, both of which, with few but notable exceptions, amounted to nothing less than the world-wide and everlasting academism of mediocrity. Abstract painting is, perhaps, the surgeon's knife of art. Painting will the sooner become enriched with its old complexities of appeal because some of our modern artists are facing its elemental problems in the raw.

O. Raymond Drey.

SOME RUSSIAN ARTISTS.

THE show of exiled Russians at Whitechapel was noteworthy not for the artistic achievements, but as an expression of national character in art.

No other country of Europe has such marked æsthetic predilections. A bias towards clearness of presentment, emphatic shapes and strong colour is hers by inheritance. Naiveté, a farce in Paris and London, is true here. Toys and eikons give with homely terseness the character of the race.

The work of Goncharova is a good example of the toy-making gift. Inventiveness sprung directly from tradition reached in her setting to the "Coq d'or" its finest flower. At Whitechapel she exhibits cubist devices grafted on to immemorial patternings of peasant costume. Her juxtaposed chromes and majentas, so "moderniste" and daring, are commonplaces of the primitive steppe village.

Sarionoff plays a more involved game, dovetailing bright splinters of colour into the forms of men and objects. By his method much animation is suggested in the artificial stage atmosphere for which he works.

Vassilieva paints dexterously a world in which all surfaces are fresh paint, all people dolls, all manners the story-book code.

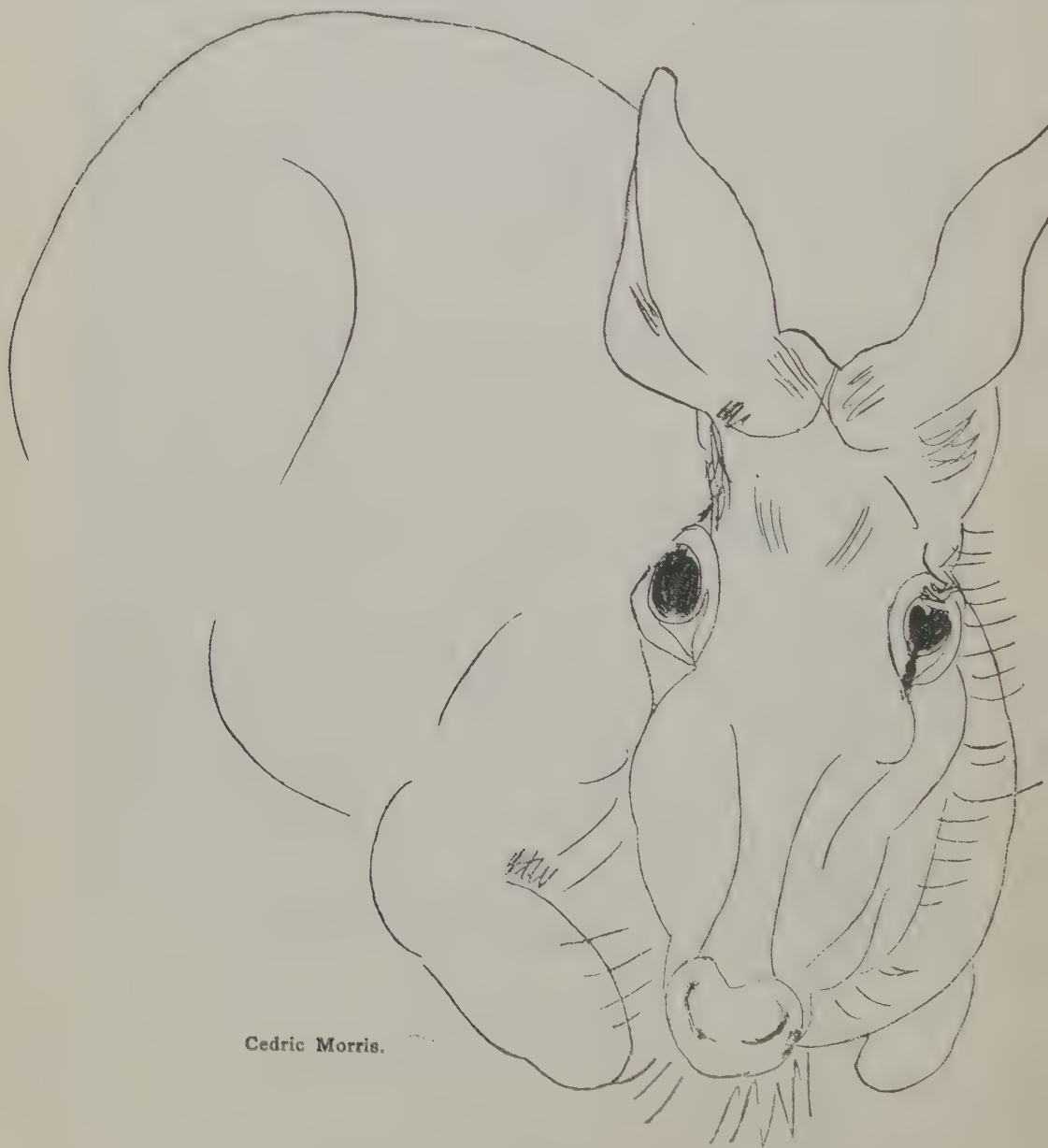
Chagal, wandering Jew, mentally native to Russia is the curious vessel of the national spirit. His subject matter is legend and fairy-tale, his personal adventures or the bald drama of peasant life. Not an illustrator, he is a summoner of forms, all of which have story as well as shape. Men, small and large, numerous important animals, fantastic suns and moons, carts and churches jostle one another throughout these amazing designs. Here, though natural congruities are outraged, there is a plastic orderliness preserved as by a miracle.

Two sculptors of talent seek emancipation of a different kind.

Archipenko has been known in Paris exhibitions for block-like stone pieces, so sparingly treated by the chisel as to leave all their natural weight and inertia. A change of intention is seen in his newest works which possess on the contrary great formal variety. Freeing his subject from all but certain selected aspects he traces in air the whorls and spirals of a sculptural shorthand.

With Lipschitz we find a fiercer disdain of realism. The sources of human form disappear as his scheme develops, and a new thing is produced relying upon itself for significance. He works to discover an ideal organisation, one plane pre-supposing another till the sum of parts is reached. Such an endeavour is a searching test of natural gift, for in those polar regions of conquest it has no allies. When Lipschitz fails it is due to an enterprise supported by a talent not equally mature.

Jessie Dismorr.



Cedric Morris.

ESSAY ON THE OBJECTIVE OF PLASTIC ART IN OUR TIME

BY

WYNDHAM LEWIS.

It was not possible to include any more sections of this essay in the present number of "The Tyro." Further sections will be printed in future numbers. It is intended to publish the complete essay, amplified, as a book.

ART SUBJECT TO LAWS OF LIFE.

From what, in my preamble addressed to the public, I have said as to the tremendous ultimate effect that art has on all our lives, it might seem that I was claiming for such painting as I advocate merely a usefulness, regarding it as, in the usual sense, a means to an end. When I claimed that a man painting in his studio a plate of apples could influence, by the way he treated those apples—the æsthetic principle involved in his vision—the art of the architect, commercial designer and so forth, that might seem to be evading affirmation of the absolute value of the painting productive of such far-reaching effects.

To begin with, I hold that there is never an *end*; everything of which our life is composed, pictures and books as much as anything else, is a means only, in the sense that the work of art exists in the body of the movement of life. It may be a strong factor of progress and direction, but we cannot say that it is the end or reason of things, for it is so much implicated with them; and when we are speaking of art we suddenly find that we are talking of life all the time. The end that we set ourselves, again, and that we are able to imagine but not to possess, is so relative, that we are operating in a purely conventional system of our own. A picture, in the interminable series of pictures, is in the same position, in one way, as is a scientific theory. Let us take a concrete example of that. Professor Sir W. H. Bragg (to name, I think, the best authority) suggests to-day that we may have to return to the corpuscular theory of light, abandoning the wave theory that has passed as the likeliest for so long, and which superseded Newton's theory of a bombardment of particles. But it would not be the *same* corpuscular theory that would then be arrived at, but one that had passed through the ether waves, so to speak. It is quite possible that the wave theory may come in for another lease of life, with the constant arrival of new factors of knowledge, beyond the revised Newtonian view of the matter, if such once more prevails.

Is there a culmination to that series, and whither do those speculations tend? Whatever the answer may be to that, art is in the same position as science, in one sense: that is it has the same experimental character, and exhibits the same spectacle of constant evolution. To see this evolution at work life-size, we will take the painting of our own times. The French impressionist picture of the last century provided a new experience in the historic chain.

This success was taken over by the school that succeeded the impressionist, other elements were introduced, and again a new thing was the result. This "newness" in both cases possessed the merit of being what the painter of the preceding school would have evolved had he been given a double term of life. It did not mean the death of a good thing, but its fecundation. The inexhaustible material of life, as it comes along, suggests constantly a readjustment and revision of what is there when it arrives. The new thing in art, is not *better* than the thing that preceded it, except at the turn of the tide in a period of great poorness and decadence, when a dissolution and death is occurring. It *may* be better, though never better than the best already recorded or existing. It may be worse. But it is a growth out of its immediate predecessor, and is marching in time, also, with the life with which it is environed. A form of it becomes extinct, perhaps, in one race, and is taken up in another.

The way in which science differs, at first sight, from art, is that the progress of scientific knowledge seems a positive and illimitable progression; in the sense that we know more to-day about the phenomenon of electricity, for example, or of disease, or the structure of the world, than men are recorded ever to have known. There is reason to believe that we shall soon be still better informed. In painting, on the other hand, a masterpiece of Sung or of the best sculpture of Dynastic Egypt is, as art, impossible to improve on, and very little has been produced in our time that could bear comparison with it.

But art is a valuation: in its relation to science it is somewhat in the position philosophy has so far occupied. Science presents men with more and more perfected instruments, and the means of material ascendancy: these appliances are used, and the use of them reacts on the user, and on his estimate of the meaning and possibilities of life. These estimates and beliefs are chalked up, and more or less critically signalled, in the works of the artist, and assessed sometimes by the philosopher. So science, in a sense, is criticised by art at the same time as is man.

The popular current belittlement of the function of what, since Socrates, has been called philosophy, tends, as is always the case, to become vindictive; to thrust too harshly some hero of the moment into the empty throne. But no doubt philosophy must become something else to survive, though the character of mind that has made a man up to the present a philosopher will

still operate. The pseudo-scientific element in philosophy, with the growth of exact specialized science, has brought it to its present pass. That unbridled emotional element found in it, that has discredited most speculation in retrospect, is proper to art, where it can be usefully organised and controlled. All that side of the philosopher has its legitimate outlet there. And the man of science, so long as he remains ideally that, is a servant and not a master. He is the perfect self-effacing highly technical valet of our immediate life. The philosopher as such shows every sign of disintegrating into something like (1) the artist, (2) the man of science, and (3) the psychologist. The artist gets a good share, it is certain, of the booty attending this demise.

At the moment of this break-up it is perhaps natural that art and science should both be momentarily swollen with the riches of this neighbouring province suffering partition. The disinherited spirit of the philosopher finds asylum in these related activities. The philosopher, that hybrid of the religious teacher, man of science and artist, was always, certainly, a more artificial and vulnerable figure than his neighbours. And yet neither the artist nor the man of science can take his place.

When, however, the definitely intellectual character of art to-day is complained of, and artists are accused of theorizing too much on the subject of their books and pictures, one cannot do better than quote David Hume where, in the process of relating morals to the æsthetic sense, he writes: "But in many orders of beauty, particularly those of the finer arts, it is requisite to employ much reasoning, in order to feel the proper sentiment; and a false relish may frequently be corrected by argument and reflection. There are just grounds to conclude that moral beauty partakes much of this latter species, and demands the assistance of our intellectual faculties, in order to give it a suitable influence on the human mind."

The finer the art, the more extended the role the intellectual faculties Hume speaks of are called upon to play.

The concatenation and growth of scientific theories (to return to our earlier argument) may be like the growth of a tree, which from the start is destined for a certain height, volume and longevity. The human mind, evolving its theorizing chain, may have such a circumscribed and restricted destiny. It certainly is as irretrievably rooted in its soil, and on any at present ascertainable base

it cannot balance itself more than a certain height in its atmosphere. If you take this restricted point of view (and all human life is lived in some such assumption) art then will always be its ultimate necessity : it is what the philosopher comes to out of the discomfort of his system ; what, for the man in the street, cannot with impunity be divorced from the attitudes and very form of his religious belief ; and it is the ideal check on the mechanical encroachments of science.

ART AND GAMES.

The game of cricket or billiards is an ingenious test of our relative, but indeed quite clumsy and laughable, prowess. These games depend for their motive on the physical difficulties that our circumscribed extension and capacities entail. It is out of the discrepancy between *absolute* equilibrium, power, and so on, of which our mind is conscious, and the pitiable reality, that the stuff of these games is made. Art is cut out of a similar substance.

The charm of a game consists partly in our inordinate satisfaction with ourselves when we succeed in some trivial physical manœuvre. Such satisfaction would be impossible without the existence of the humorous philosophy of sport. This British invention has produced what is called the "sporting" attitude. Fundamentally that is nothing but a humorous (an artist or a philosophic) acknowledgment of our grotesque and prodigious limitation. Why we are able to embrace this philosophy without abjectness, is evidently on account of the great discrepancy that our consciousness of this situation predicates between what we can perfectly well imagine and what, in the limited time, conditions and space at our disposal, we can accomplish. The man, as "sportsman," says, to all intents and purposes, when he is administering the sporting spirit : "Steady, steady ! Easy, e-a-s-y ! It'll all be the same a hundred years hence. Don't fling yourself on that ball as though it were a chocolate-ice in the tropics, or a loaf of bread let loose on a famine. It's only a little leather balloon. It's only a game you're playing. We all know you're a very wonderful player, my friend, but don't murder that man, or commit suicide : it's only a game." Or if he is being "a sport" at the moment, himself, his gesture of restraint or abnegation will declare : "This is not *real* life. We're only exercising our bodies, laughing at ourselves a little, for the funny little machines that we are ; being deliberately children."

The Englishman is justly proud of this invention. His attitude, and his games, are a great practical contribution to human life : though they are also peculiarly his own, and it is doubtful if his formula can be satisfactorily used by any one else. The *revers de la medaille* I will not go into here ; though it evidently consists in the fact that, in the aggregate, the Englishman has not a " reality " good enough to place against his " game " : or rather he has it, but omits to use it. His achievement is an analytic and practical one ; a slowing down, a sedative pill for too harsh vitality. In Taine's description of the English, he refers to the abnormal checks required for so much egotism as he found among them. Turn the coin round, and back to back with the philosophic athlete you will find nothing more than—Queen Victoria (whose name I hesitated to mention, on account of the lese Strachey it entails). The national aggregate sports, on it's currency, the athlete : but it has not, as it should have, Shakespeare or Newton on the other side.

According to my view, all intellectual endeavour is in the same contingent category as a game of cricket or billiards. It is remarkable what can be done with the mind, and the doing it is stimulating : just as it is surprising, or so it is felt to be, that we should be able to leap so high and as far as we do, run 100 yards under 10 seconds, defend our wicket for so many overs, and so forth. But, although the mind possesses immensely more scope and resource, and it's exercise is vastly more complex and exciting, it ultimately is marking time as much as the body, it has the movements of marching forward, but does not march, but is energetically drumming one spot all the while. Its method is built up, like that of a game, on the same reservations ; and even like the appetite for the game, is mixed with a sense of the weak and the ridiculous.

The art impulse reposes upon a conviction that the state of limitation of the human being is more desirable than the state of the automaton ; or a feeling of the gain and significance residing in this human fallibility for us. To feel that our consciousness is bound up with this non-mechanical phenomenon of life ; that, although helpless in face of the material world, we are in some way superior to and independent of it ; and that our mechanical imperfection is the symbol of that. In art we are in a sense playing at being what we designate as matter. We are entering the forms of the mighty phenomena around us, and seeing how near we can get to being a river or a star, without actually *becoming* that. Or we

are placing ourselves somewhere behind the contradictions of matter and mind, where an identity (such as the school of American realists, William James, for example, has fancied) may more primitively exist.

Our modern "impersonality" and "coldness" is in this sense a constant playing with the fire; with solar fire, perhaps, and the chill of interstellar space—where the art impulse of the astronomer comes in, for instance.

But an astronomer, confronted with a whole drove of universes, is by no means abashed. They are his game merely, and he knows it. He regards the stars as the cattle of his mind, and space as his meadow. He must do, even to the simplest observation; or else he would not be so jolly even as he is.

Some adjustment, then, between the approach of a conscious being to that mechanical perfection, and the fact of his mechanical incompetence (since mechanical perfection will not tally with the human thing) is the situation that produces art. The game consists in seeing how near you can get, without the sudden extinction and neutralisation that awaits you as matter, or as the machine. In our bodies we have got already so near to extinction! And with these portions of mountain and star, in which we remain with such hardihood and even insolence—playing fast and loose daily with our bacillus-ridden, terribly exposed *pied-a-terre*—we are in a daily æsthetic relation. The delight in physical danger, another ingredient of our games, the major motive of the switchback, of mountain climbing and so forth, is the more extreme form of our flirtation with extinction, or matter, if you like. All the thrill that we obtain from an exercise of the sense of humour is based on this phenomenon.

In a great deal of art you find its motive in the assertion of the beauty and significance of the human as opposed to the mechanical; a virtuoso display of its opposite. But this virtuosity, in its precision even in being imprecise, is not so removed from a mechanical perfection as would at first sight appear.

There is a passage in Dostoevsky's "Letters from the Underworld" quoted by Lavrin, that has a bearing on this point. I will quote it before leaving this part of my argument. "If ever a formula is discovered which shall exactly express our wills and whims, make it clear what they are governed by, what means of

diffusion they possess : a formula mathematical in its precision, then man will have ceased even to exist. Who would care to exercise his will-power according to a table of logarithms ? A man would become, in such circumstances, not a human being, but an organ-handle or something of the sort."

STANDARDS IN ART.

The difficulty of standards in art is very great. But it is not more difficult in art than in anything else ; science alone, with its standards of weight, can, in its dealing with dead matter, pretend to a certain finality. No one controverts the velocity of light, established for us by Römer, though its constancy may be questioned : little facts like the distance of the Earth from Saturn remain quiet and unchallenged. Once these things have been *measured*, there is an end to the matter. The science consists solely in inventing the most satisfactory means of effecting these measurements.

Metaphysics, on the other hand, is in a chronic state of flux and chaos ; so much so that to-day the metaphysician seems to have been driven off the field. As I have said already, I think he will reappear in some rather different form ; and he will reappear all the better for his holiday among the hospitable arts and sciences. (For he *must* be somewhere : and I do not believe that he has become a stockbroker, in disgust, or a commission agent). Kant, in his *Prolegomena*, writes of his science of metaphysics : " In this domain there is as yet no standard weight and measure to distinguish sound knowledge from shallow talk." And, again, " It seems almost ridiculous, while every other science is certainly advancing, that in this, which pretends to be wisdom incarnate, we should constantly move round the same spot, without gaining a single step. And so its followers have melted away : we do not find men confident of their ability to shine in other sciences venturing their reputations here." At least a standard in art is not more difficult to fix than it is in this constantly discomfited sister science.

What has happened to philosophy has also, to some degree, happened to the fine arts. The incessant disputes between schools, the impossibility in which the public finds itself of establishing an interest (whether commercial or snobbish) anywhere, has ended by exhausting its patience, and it falls back on Rolls-Royces and whiskies and sodas with a vicious and defiant glance at the artist.

"I hate books," "I hate pictures," or "I hate music," is a remark not infrequently heard on the lips of people who formerly would have derived some satisfaction from supporting the arts. They have backed too many "duds": they know that there is nothing they can encourage or identify themselves with that will not involve them almost in abuse, that will not be violently attacked. It will be almost as though they had done the beastly thing themselves! Such pictures, music or books as would *not* involve them in this, are too stupid and clearly insignificant to waste time about. So, desiring a quiet life, they fight shy of the arts altogether.

And yet, because this produces a vacuum, which as true children of nature they abhor, in their existence as social beings, and makes their life shrink to a valueless and less excusable affair, all this leaves them a little ashamed and worried. All science can give them, and to it they repeatedly turn, in the shape of values, is a scepticism of which they have enough and to spare, and accumulations of animal luxury, which they feel, in its naked effrontery, should in some way be clothed with values, and the intellectual disguises in which their selfishness has always formerly been wrapped.

This question of standard is forever the ultimate difficulty where art is concerned. When the social life on which art depends becomes especially diseased and directionless, it appears with more insistence than ever, forced out of the contradictions beneath. This is because the picture, statue or book is in effect a living and active thing, evolving with other living things, and suffering their checks and distresses.

You can have a perfect snowball: what you expect of it is that it be made of snow and nothing but snow. That is all you mean by "perfect" in this case. All snow is the same, and so you get easily enough your perfect snowball.

But the book or the picture again not only is living but gives an account of life. The work of art is produced by means of an instrument not originally shaped for performing these literary or other feats, and one that has to be employed concurrently at a variety of blunting tasks—it may be, even, making a living in a bank, or livery stable. The mind, hybrid as it is, with no end and no beginning, with no nice boundary at which it could be said: "Up to this mark you can depend on a perfect result, and all that arises you are competent to deal with": from this mind nothing can be awaited but such productions as may cause us to say: "That

is the work of a good specimen of human intelligence": just as you say 'a handsome woman,' 'a fine cat,' or in French, 'un beau negre.' Calderon de la Barca, Voltaire or Plotinus are good human specimens. There is nothing "perfect" about their plays, novels or treatises. They are good in relation to the ineptitude around them. Strengthen this ineptitude, isolate it, into a potion of some body, and you get one of these striking men. But you must not mix it *too* strongly, or vitalize it too much: for he who sees God, dies. Gather into one personality all the graces and virtues of the three men I have taken, and you would have no further need of any one of the three, theoretically. But then a synthesis of their prowesses would be less stimulating for us than onereally livelyspecimen of such a distinguished triad. Amalgamated, they would be a pale shadow of their separate selves. Perfection, therefore, from this standpoint, appears as a platonic ideal, and is a thing with which we have not very much to do on our present road. With perfect snowballs or lightning conductors, we have some commerce; but not with "perfect" works of art or human beings. The next point is this: could you disintegrate Voltaire or Plotinus still further; and would you get a still further improvement? I should rather say that Voltaire, &c., were the exact degree of disintegration from some all-inclusive intelligence needed to arrive at what we are adapted to comprehend. And that any further disintegration results in the dispersion of mediocrity, of little Voltaires: and anything more universal must progressively cancel itself.

If you conclude from this that I am treading the road to the platonic heaven, my particular road is deliberately chosen for the immanent satisfactions that may be found by the way. You may know Schopenhauer's eloquent and resounding words, where, in his forcible fashion, he is speaking of what art accomplishes. "It therefore pauses at this particular thing: the course of time stops: the relations vanish for it: only the essential, the idea, is its object."

That might be a splendid description of what the great work of plastic art achieves. It "pauses at this *particular thing*," whether that thing be an olive-tree that Van Gogh saw; a burgher of Rembrandt or Miss Stein. "The course of time stops." A sort of immortality descends upon these objects. It is an immortality, which, in the case of the painting, they have to pay for with death, or at least with its coldness and immobility.

Those words are, however, part of a passage in the *World as Will and Idea* that it may be useful to quote fully :—

“ While science, following the unresting and inconstant stream of the fourfold forms of reason and consequent, with each end attained sees further, and can never reach a final goal nor attain full satisfaction, any more than by running we can reach the place where the clouds touch the horizon ; art, on the contrary, is everywhere at its goal. For it plucks the object of its contemplation out of the stream of the world’s course, and has it isolated before it.”

We might contrast this with a Bergsonian impressionism, which would urge you to leave the object in its vital *milieu*. Again, the “ presence of mind ” in the midst of the empirical reality which Schopenhauer cites as the characteristic of genius, this coldness is a self-isolation, in any case ; for he who opens his eyes wide enough will always find himself alone. Where the isolation occurs, of subject or object, outside or inside the vortex, is the same thing. The impressionist doctrine, with its interpenetrations, its tragic literalness, its wavy contours, its fashionable fuss, points always to one end : the state in which life itself supersedes art : which as Schopenhauer points out, would be excellent if people knew how to use their eyes. But if they did it would no longer be “ life ” as we commonly mean it.

To continue the above passage, omitting several lines : “ This last method of considering things (that of experience and science) may be compared to a line infinitely extended in a horizontal direction and the former to a vertical line which cuts it at any point. The method of viewing things which proceeds in accordance with the principle of sufficient reason is the rational method, and it alone is valid and of use in practical life and in science. The method which looks away from the content of this principle is the method of genius, which is only valid and of use in art. The first is the method of Aristotle ; the second is, on the whole, that of Plato.”

The act of creation, of which a book or picture is one form, is always an act of the human will, like poisoning your business rival, or setting your cap at somebody ; the complete existence and exercise of this will entails much human imperfection, which will be incorporated in the book or picture, giving it the nervousness of its contours, and the rich odours, the sanguine or pallid appearance, which recommends it to us.

In art there are no laws, as there are in science. There is the general law to sharpen your taste and your intelligence in every way that you can. John Constable, in writing of an exhibition, said: "Turner's light, whether it emanates from sun or moon, is always exquisite. Collins' skies and shores are true. His horizons are always pretty." That is about as far as any painter gets, except Leonardo or a very few, in analysis of what he understands so well but about which, on the side of direct concrete appraisal, there is so little to be said beyond affixing a rough epithet.

All that we can definitely say—and we know that, surely, as much as we know anything—is that Bach's music is better than Paul Rubens or that the Sixtine chapel is better art than the Nurse Cavell monument, with relation to any end that we can conceive. Only a few people are able to discriminate, it is true, between these respective works of art. A freak might be found who would derive identically the same intellectual satisfaction from gazing at the Nurse Cavell monument that Picasso would from gazing at Michelangelo's paintings in Rome. And for this freak there would be no difference between them. But if that were so, it would be Michelangelo that he would be looking at, in reality, or what is Michelangelo for us. And in any case he would be mad.

Every time has its appointed end, and its means are proportioned to it. Beauty occurs in the way that is met in motor-car construction or the human body. No more in pictures than in anything else can it be isolated from some organic principle. It is a portion of the Means, nothing else.

A THIRD METHOD, BETWEEN SUBJECT AND OBJECT.

The function of the artist being to show you the world, only a realler one than you would see, unaided, the delicate point in his task is to keep as near to you as possible, at the same time getting as far away as our faculties will stretch. The motive of this contradictory manœuvre is as follows. He has, before he can show you reality, to dissociate himself from the objective world entirely, and to approach it as a stranger or (which is the same thing) a child. He, ideally, must not take any of the acquired practical information of daily life with him, to the point from which his observations are to be made. Any of the fever of combat (where he is at his task) would impair the equilibrium of his instrument.

When anyone says, however, a "realler" world, not only an intenser and more compact statement of it than the usual working of our senses provides, is meant, but also a different world.

For what the artist's public also has to be brought to do is to see its world, and the people in it, as a *stranger* would. There have been so far principally two methods of achieving this. One is to display a *strange* world to the spectator, and yet one that has so many analogies to his that, as he looks, startled into attention by an impressive novelty, he sees his own reality through this veil, as it were, momentarily in truer colours. The other method is the less objective one of luring the spectator to the point from which, inevitably, the world will appear as the artist sees it, and the spectator from that point of vantage paints the picture for himself, but with the artist's colours and his eyes. The first of these methods can be described very roughly as the impersonal and objective method, and the second the personal and subjective one. The latter method (contrary to what is sometimes supposed) seems to be more assured of a positive result: for a lesser effort of intelligence is required on the part of the public. It is the method that usually characterizes the art of an undeveloped society. The former, in which everyone participates more fully, is proper to a "civilized" time. The civilized man again is less willing or less able to abandon his personality sufficiently. He is (each member of the thronging audience) a little artist himself. He will not be meddled with: he must be addressed and moved, if at all, in the capacity of critic. He is not adventurous enough to go far field. It is a case of the mountain going away from Mahomet where Mahomet will not budge himself, if it is desired that the mountain should not be so near to the spectator.

The artist, unless of a very lucky or privileged description, can only exist, even, by pretending to be one of the audience. Nothing less democratic than that will be tolerated.

By this description of what we call a "civilized" public you may gather that I am not very enthusiastic about it. In that you will be right: but it is not because I contrast it nostalgically with its opposite. A sort of undisciplined raw democracy of the intellect is what "civilized" describes in our time. It is the revolt of the not naturally very wise or sensitive against any intellectual rule or order (parodying or marching in sympathy with political revolution).

What I consider that a certain amount of contemporary art presages, is the development of a new method—a third, if you like—that should not, if it comes, resemble the religious tyranny of the subjective method, and would escape from the half sophistication that the other method begets or for which, partly, it is designed. This point I will develop later, however; showing more fully, I hope, what I find unsatisfactory in these opposing methods, how the reconciliation might be effected: and how I see in some work of to-day an indication of the approach of a time when it may be used.

THE SENSE OF THE FUTURE.

Bergson's view that the permanence of the work of art, or its continued interest for us, depends on its uniqueness, on the fact that such and such a thing will *never happen again*, would make everything in life a work of art. This uniqueness is a portion of everything, and need not be invoked for the definition of art. In fact, the other factors of the work of art of an opposite and general description are those that distinguish it from the rest of life, cancelling as far as possible its uniqueness. Indeed, as I have shown, it would seem that successful expression occurs exactly at the point where, should this uniqueness be diminished any further, it would lose in force as human expression. Even one of the only standards of measurement we have is the distance to which a personality can penetrate into the general or the abstract, without losing its force and reality for us.

The object, in Schopenhauer's words: "Plucked out of the stream," also is only plucked so far as will still enable it to breathe and live. Or rather—to dispense with the metaphor—the "plucking" consists just in *abstracting* it. When it has been abstracted it is not quite what it was when in the stream. It is always a *different* thing, as we have said, when conveyed to us as an object of contemplation. And yet, it is that particular thing, still, that it was in the stream. For the distance it has traversed in the process of abstraction is insignificant if compared with the distances involved were it to reach an ultimate abstraction.

The question of uniqueness is bound up with that of the "present time" for the "present" is the essence of the unique, or of *our* unique. I will deal with this later on in the present essay, only considering for the moment our relation to the *future*, which must be considered at this point.

If it is true that all the past is in us, that it is this past, in terms of the present, that the artist shows you when he excites you most ;—where, we must ask, in all this, does the future come in ? Tragedy drags to the surface your wild monsters, gives them a few hours' frolic, and they are then driven back quietly to their dens. There is another sort of artist (of which the Italian Futurist, now deceased, is an excellent specimen) who should really be called a Presentist. He is closely related to the pure Impressionist. He pretends to live, and really succeeds sometimes, a sort of spiritual hand-to-mouth existence. He has tried with frenzy to identify himself with matter—with the whizzing, shrieking body, the smooth rolling machine, the leaping gun. And his life is such an eternal present as is matter's : only, being a machine, he wears out : but with his death nothing comes to an end, or is supposed to come to an end, but the matter of which his dynamic present is composed.

There are, however, some men who seem to contain the future as others contain the past. These are, in the profoundest sense, also our men of action, if you admire that term : for, as the hosts of the un-lived thing, they are the impersonification of action. I think that every poet, painter or philosopher worth the name has in his composition a large proportion of *future* as well as of *past*. The more he has, the more prophetic intuition, and the more his energy appears to arrive from another direction to that of the majority of men (namely, the past), the better poet, painter or philosopher he will be.

A space must be cleared, all said and done, round the hurly-burly of the present. No man can reflect or create, in the intellectual sense, while he is acting—fighting, playing tennis, or making love. *The present man in all of us is the machine.* The farther away from the present, though not too far, the more free. So the choice must be between the past and the future. Every man has to choose, or rather the choice is early made for each of us.

We all know people, and not necessarily old people, who live in the past. The past that they survey is only a prolonged present, stretching back as far as their mind's eye can reach. We know a great many more, the majority, of machine-like, restless and hard individuals, who positively rattle with a small, hollow, shaken ego ; or, less objectionably, throb and purr with the present vibration of a plodding and complacent mechanism.

The man of the future, the man who is in league with time, is as engrossed *away* from the actual as the first man is in his dear past. There is not such a sad light over the future : it is not infected

with so many old murders, and stale sweetheartings, and therefore the man accustomed to its landscapes is of a more cheerful disposition than his neighbour the other way.

I must leave this attractive figure, however, and once more hurry on, hoping to deal with him more fully before this essay is completed.

I will offer an exhortation, however, on this theme before departing from it.

You handle with curiosity and reverence a fragment belonging to some civilization developed three milleniums ago. Why cannot you treat the future with as much respect? Even if the Future is such a distant one that the thing you hold in your hand, or the picture you look at has something of the mutilation and imperfection that the fragment coming to you from the past also has, is not the case a similar one? May it not actually possess as well the "charm" you allow to your antiquarian sense? I think we should begin to regard ourselves all more in this light—as drawing near to a remote future, rather than receding from an historic past. The time has perhaps arrived to do that! Have not a few of us been preparing?

The future possesses its history as well as the past, indeed. All living art is the history of the future. The greatest artists, men of science and political thinkers, come to us from the future—from the opposite direction to the past.

THE FUNCTION OF THE EYE.

The practical and, as we say, "prosaic" character of the function of our visual sense does not enable us to experience through it normally a full emotional impression. We cannot dream with our eyes open. Association is too strong for us. We are all, in a sense even, so thoroughly hidden from each other because we see each other. It is more difficult to exercise our imagination when the eye is operating. (The ear, being blind, is in that respect better off.) The practical and very necessary belittlement accomplished for us by the eye at the same time invalidates its claim to priority as the king organ where imaginative expression is concerned, although in every other sense it is so supreme. Even the eye cannot have the apple and eat it too; or be the apple of the mind's eye, and Nature's as well. The eye has to pay, emotionally, for its practical empire over our lives.

In dreams, however, the eye is in every way supreme. Our dreams are so muffled (or are such dreams only a painter's?) that

they are nearly as silent as the Kinema. There the mind, by arranging things as it requires them for its own delight or horror, can get the full emotional shock, the purely visionary quality that early in life becomes dissociated from our exercise of the visual sense.

In what does this "emotional" quality, the stripping of things and people by the eye of their more significant and complete emotional vesture, consist? Simply in an incessant analysis of the objects presented to us for the practical purposes of our lives. We are given by the eye *too much*: a surfeit of information and "hard fact," that does not, taken literally, tally with our completer values for the objects in question. To make up, from the picture presented to us by the eye, a synthesis of a person or a thing, we must modify the order for which the eye is responsible, and eliminate much of the physical chaos that only serves to separate us from the imaginative truth we are seeking.

The eye, in itself, is a stupid organ, or shall we say a stolid one. It is robust to a fault, where the ear is, if any thing, hypersensitive. Everything received through the eye from the outside world has to be "treated" before it can be presented to the imagination with a chance of moving it. The law of this "treatment" is, first, a process of *generalization*. An intense particularization may, however, on the principle of extremes meeting, have the same effect. But, broadly, it is by a *generalizing* of the subject-matter that you arrive at the rendering likely to be accepted by the imagination. I am using the word "imagination" to stand for that function of the mind that assesses and enjoys the purely useful work performed by the other faculties; the artist-principle in the mind, in short.

In traditional psychology the distinction between imagination and memory is said to be that with the former the sensations are arbitrarily re-ordered; whereas "memory" is the term we apply to a fainter picture of something already experienced, but the sensations occurring in the same order, in the order of nature. Dreams are an example of sensations evolved, with great complexity, in a new order, and with new emotional stresses and juxtapositions. The work of the dramatist or novelist is in this category, and that of most painters whose work is remembered. But the work of art does the re-ordering in the interests of the intellect as well as of the emotions.

It is by studying the nature of this process of organization in art, taking several concrete examples, that I shall begin the search for the laws that govern this form of invention.

BUGS.

MY first term at St. Vincent's was the summer one. It was simply awful being driven over by Mussell in the T-cart. Old Bobby jog-trotted, plop, plop, down the curly drive between nasty thick laurels and an iron railing. On the other side there was a field where a lot of boys were playing cricket, but I didn't know it was cricket till Mussell told me. Lucas took my box and told me to go into a little room with a lot of photographs of boys on the wall while he went on talking to Mussell and patting Bobby. I didn't even see them drive away because, while I was standing at the window, Mr. Beasley came in. He was so enormous I could hardly see his face, and he had a long red beard ending in a point in the middle of his chest and he put the tips of it into his mouth while he asked me questions I couldn't answer. His trousers were short and he wore low shoes that were nearly as long as his beard and had very thick soles. He pulled the bell and told Lucas to take me into the playing field.

A boy was standing close by and I went up to him and asked him what his name was. He said, "What's yours?" Afterwards he told me his name was Ramsey and I asked him to be my friend. He laughed and stood still for a while looking at the boys playing. Then he walked across to another place and I walked with him and tried to take hold of his hand, but he pulled it away. I didn't know then we were part of the game and were fielding, and he called me a little fool. I told him I thought he was going to be my best friend but now I knew he was my bitterest enemy.

After the beginning of the term they put hurdles across part of the field where it went into a square between high hedges and one Saturday afternoon the boys helped to make hay. It was very hot and Lucas unlocked the cupboard where he kept the boys' hampers and we all bought bottles of lemonade. Paddy Houston and I made a regular little hut, like Livingstone, out of the haycocks and after we had drunk our bottles of lemonade we lay down in the lovely smelling hay and I told him about when Papa and Mamma and I and Soror went to Bonn, only I said Pater because the first day Lopez kicked me for saying Papa. Paddy didn't believe about Soror being black, he said nobody ever saw a black footman and he didn't believe about the storks in the marshes at Bonn nor about the soldiers marching back from France with green wreaths on the tops of their

rifles. And when Paddy told Lopez afterwards, he didn't believe me either, and twisted my wrist. I was lying on my back and I could just see the sky through a little hole at the top of the hut. Every now and then a big bird flew across and then a little white cloud. I was half in a dream, but Paddy began talking to a man outside who had very thick reddish curly hair and a brown belt with a brass buckle that shone like anything. The sweat was pouring down his face and he was rubbing it with a huge red pocket-handkerchief. Then he spat on his hands and rubbed them on the handle of his rake and went away. I asked Paddy why he spat, and he told me all labourers did that, and that they had bugs in their hair. He said if I watched this man I should see him scratch his head. So I got up and watched him and in a little while he stopped raking and scratched his head. When he did that, I went up to him and asked him if it was true he had bugs in his hair because I wanted to know what they were like. But he got very angry and was going to hit me with the rake, so I ran away as fast as I could. When I told Paddy about it, he roared with laughter and said I was the biggest idiot he had ever seen.

We had tea at long tables; the smallest boys sat at the end near the masters. I was next to Mr. Atwood. He was very strong and had beautiful blue eyes, and I liked him very much. I was just going to ask him what bugs were when Mr. Beasley came behind my chair so that his beard touched my face and whispered in my ear I was to come to his study the next morning after breakfast. Mr. Atwood looked at me in a funny way, but he didn't say anything, nor did Baby Marr who sat next to me and must have heard. But all of a sudden I remembered that Paddy had told me Mr. Beasley always said that to a boy when he was going to give him a swishing. I was just drinking some tea and I nearly choked. Mr. Atwood looked at me so I pretended to eat, but I felt sick and he patted me on the shoulder.

I didn't say anything to Paddy, but when we went to bed I tried to remember what I ought not to have done, and I kept on waking and pulling the sheet up because I was shivering.

I don't know how I got dressed and I wanted prayers to last for ever and breakfast too, but they were over quicker than usual, and I went and knocked on the door of the study. It was brown inside and there was an awful stuffy smell. Mr. Beasley went to the corner of the room and took something in his hand. I was too

frightened to see what it was. Mr. Beasley said I ought to be ashamed to insult a poor labouring man and told me to take down my knickers and pointed to a little chair and said I was to kneel down at it. He gave me four swishes. It made an awful noise in the air and when it hit, but it didn't hurt very much and I didn't cry. I said I was very sorry, but, really, I was awfully glad because it was all over.

I found Paddy in the playground, and told him all about it and, as he wanted to see, I took him into the bogs and showed him my stripes. But before I let down my knickers, I made him promise to tell me what bugs were.

Stephen Hudson.

GROTESQUES WALKING.

THE Comic Muse called to me—"Come out and see grotesques walking!"

I left my marvelling at old bones and made the street and there they were, two and two mostly, sometimes a solitary, thud-thud they went over the street with mighty clumps lifting the strangest feet like small elephants in steel cages elephant-grey monstrous cushions loose in steel pad-pad they went inside the steel and clang the steel went mighty thumps I say up and down the street that sagged and split all ways oh come out come out with me and see grotesques walking!

The Comic Muse called to me—"Look higher, there is more yet, no longer be held by prodigious clump clump, look higher dear son!"

I left my gazing at those elephantine cushions padding within clanging steel and oh up there spider legs yards and yards of spidery shank rising from those gigantic thumping hoofs oh laugh with me dear brothers but higher still oh a jumble of rusty wheels all whirring and horribly creaking a screaming excruciating din and above that sweet son of mine the Comic Muse called to me oh when she calls me sweet son I swell so that I all but burst my lungs and buttons dear son she said there there—above each jangling dithering torso what did I see?—a Yankee rouser, the cheapest and most effective alarm in the world, this size 4/11 and when a thought came the alarm went frantically oh poor aching heads bend down to me and let me wipe your tin brows with my handkerchief, oh lay those pulsing heads awhile within the stream along the fairway and let the cars and waggons and buses and superbuses and all the turbid tide flow over them!

They gave no sign of having heard but went on walking as before.

Baffled but not discouraged I said—"These are no creations of a disordered fancy they are beings like ourselves but made otherwise, below the rusty metal of each thorax beats some heart mineral it may be but none the less full of kindly feelings and capable of respectful gratitude, within each deplorably noisy and inaccurate headpiece some prisoned intellect inscrutably manufactures a humble form of consciousness, brothers, I cried, have you speech? have you conversation? have you the power to convey ideas intelligibly? oh with what lustiness the Comic Muse burst out roaring the sudden blast swept the street completely clear of all those stalking grotesques,

have *you* speech ? have *you* conversation ? she cried, have *you* the power to convey ideas intelligibly ? oh how my heart sank among my intestines knowing myself in her divine eyes a coxcomb a numskull a solemn imbecile grotesquely falling into unconscious humour, crestfallen I slunk back to my old dry bones from which still I hope one day to extract a philosophy adequate but no more than adequate to the agitated dust storm under which figure we realists grapple with this alleged universe of so-called life.

Yet brothers when the call comes from Comic Muse or Tragic—
“ The grotesques are walking, the grotesques are walking ! ” it may come at any time in the day or night most inconvenient in the night let them walk for my part no no pour out pour out make the street and taste a steel-grey blue intellectual laughter because of that bizarre company of grotesques walking.

John Adams.

PIETA.

How strange that the gay body
with groaning anguish
should so suddenly be clay.
How strange—the livers flaccid
and corpse cold—oh and heavy.
How strange that the mother
whose heart yearns, womb yearns, breast yearns . . .
forces tears from her own clay . . .
tears of water, tears of blood
in such pain . . .
and the astounded dust is puddled into clay
while she is fire of yearning, dust of longing.
How strange, the clay wells tears of water, gouts of blood
impatient to be dust,
and Mary with tears of anguish, gouts of yearning
compels him to be clay.
So she has his weight on her knee.
Mary from out her clay
has pressed the wells of yearning
and now is dust—
and Christ is clay.
So still they do not meet
and still she has him not.

John Rodker.

A NOTE ON IMAGINATION.

Imagination in a poet is a faculty so wild and lawless, that, like a high-ranging spaniel, it must have clogs tied to it, lest it outrun the judgement. . .

Dryden: Epistle Dedicatory to the RIVAL LADIES.

I TOUCH this subject with a barge-pole of deference. It lies, like a rusty kettle, buried beneath the luxuriant and tangled undergrowth of transcendental criticism. One would gladly leave it there but for the fact that this protective undergrowth is the most prickly impediment at present blocking progress. So

Come my tan-faced children,
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,
Have you your pistols? have you your sharp-edged axes?
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Coleridge distinguished Imagination and Fancy. With Fancy—"a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space"—I am not concerned. Coleridge's distinction has been generally accepted and observed in modern criticism.

The Imagination Coleridge further subdivided into primary and secondary. The primary imagination was "the living power and prime agent of all human perception and a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM." The secondary imagination was "an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*"

It would surprise me to hear that this analysis of imagination is still accepted. Coleridge's "primary imagination" is far too transcendental either to admit of definite comprehension or to serve as a workable unit in criticism. His definition of "secondary imagination" depends on the definition of primary imagination, though I think it describes broadly the idea of imagination at present current—imagination as an active *process* of the mind. This, at any rate, is the idea of imagination that since Coleridge's day has functioned in criticism.

The object of this note is not to pick logical holes in Coleridge's pretty fabric, but to attack current misconceptions. Coleridge wrote metaphysical criticism for a metaphysical age. We have advanced from the metaphysical age into the psychological age, and

the general necessity is to transvalue our critical categories into the terms of our more scientific mood.

I suggest that it would be well to suspect Imagination when it is accompanied by the definite article "the." *The Imagination* implies (as Coleridge implied) the existence of an independent activity : *the imagination*. Generally, our critics would say that this activity *creates*. If you asked them what it creates, they would reply : the poems and novels, the paintings and sculptures that we admire. Any further questioning of this naïveté would only produce the *petitio principii* that the critics admire works of art possessing imagination. But in the dialectical process you succeed in making the critic abandon his "the," and speak of imagination simply.

Let us now examine Imagination. I cannot write with any authority on the etymological history of the word, but the dictionary suggests a root implying *counterpart*, *image*, or *reflection*. This root meaning corresponds with the psychological meaning. Psychologically, we are machines registering on a physical record every object and event that enters the field of our various sensory organs. So far the process is "photographic" (motor or instinctive). But the same organ (or system) that receives the impressions of objects and events is capable of reacting negatively or positively in two centres : in emotion or in thought. (There are certain more or less complex combinations of both reactions, but these we may neglect for present considerations.) Emotion is a physical reaction : it is said to be due to a chemical stimulus ; as when in *fear* the blood is infused with a secretion from the adrenal glands which induces secondary effects (again felt as emotions or as muscular tensions). But obviously emotion cannot be identified with imagination, though it may create an aura of suggestion and thus stimulate the process of thought.

Reaction in the intellectual centre (thought) occurs in many complex combinations, but simply it is due to a sensation received stirring up associations among the dormant impressions already recorded in the brain. When these associations are irrelevant, we are experiencing what Coleridge called Fancy ; but it should be noted that the apparently irrelevant is sometimes, as in dreams, symbolically relevant.

When the association is relevant, then, in my opinion (and this is my main thesis) one process and one process only occurs. Sensation creates image ; then, by a process named "mnemonic causation" by Mr. Bertrand Russell (see "The Analysis of Mind") image is

linked to image, and a chain of images is made. This chain, when complete, this process, is REASON. But where, then, does "the" imagination come in? It does not come in. *The* imagination does not exist. Only Fancy (as defined by Coleridge) on the one hand, and Reason on the other hand. Fancy, from a critical point of view, is valueless. Reason is the only value. When in legitimate practice we speak of Imagination, I contend we mean the process of reason. When our romantic critics speak of "the" imagination, they mean Fancy.

Reason is the relevant association of images. So is, if we like to use the word, Imagination. But I think we should erase the word "imagination" from our critical vocabulary. It is only a confusing synonym. "The" imagination should be confined to the sickroom of romanticism.

It should be noted that Reason, being a catenation of images, which in their turn are the sensory perceptions of objects and events, is a structure of reality—so much steel and concrete of actuality. That is, I think, the only sense in which we need use the word "reality" in criticism. Conversely, of course, we can argue that reality is the essence of reason, and therefore of art.

Herbert Read.

"SOUTHERN SYNCOPATED SINGERS."

Lime's full moon !
The land crabs stalk by on tall fingers.
Birds scream
and steadily march the white ants.
In the full moon of the limes
the pygmies howl to each other
notes piercing sweet and wild.
Their gods stand darkling round them
and the drums make a heavy tired noise
of large leaves turning.
In greasy light
our godhead shines within us thinly.
Clothed in piercing sound
the granite fetishes
brood through sunken eyes.

John Rodker

TYRONIC DIALOGUES.—X. and F.

Scene : A Studio.

[Two forms in dark tweed coats are seen gesticulating against a large blank canvas on which the sun's breakfast light is glowing. As the dialogues advance the canvas is noticed to be gradually darkening and to be becoming a picture.]

X.—Remember, my dear F., that you are for every man a little picture of himself : a badly drawn and irritating picture of himself. Therefore, never show that you notice, if a painter, writer or musician, the existence of another artist's work. Above all, never be so uncircumspect as to praise it. For the man so treated will say : " F., I was told, has said something nice about my work. The dirty dog ! I suppose he means people to think that my work is so contemptible that he can afford to praise it. Or is his game to suggest that I am a follower of his ? Or does he intend to sell that drawing of mine that he gave me £5 for, and is he stimulating the market ? Or does he just wish to strut down the street with a nice feeling of being generous and grand ? In any case, he wishes to belittle me either by giving himself a cheap extra two inches, or by chipping an inch or two off me by making me appear inoffensive. Any way, the *dirty* dog, I'll pay him, I will ! "

F.—But what are you to say if a man shows you a painting that you consider good ?

X.—My dear F.—Fool ! And that so rarely happens !

F.—But should it happen, what is to be done ?

X.—To remain on good terms with your fellow artists you must explode with derisive invective : sneer a little or whatever is expected of you. That will be reported to them and they will feel that all is well : that you appreciate them.

F.—But what is then left for you to do when you are shown *bad* paintings ?

X.—Oh, you always say that *they* are good ! Charming, jolly, or good.

F.—But does that apply to your dealings with the really good artist ?

X.—If you cling to your pathetic belief in the existence of such a thing, yes : for he would never believe that you understood the world so little as not to see the damaging effect your geniality as regards him would have.

Scene : Same.

F.—I am having some trouble with B. He lies freely about me. He intrigues. He——

X.—Hush !

F.—What do you mean, dear X. ?

X.—That you must never allow such things to pass your lips. With me, of course, you may. But even with me it might produce in you the habit of such naivetés. That is, of course, the great danger, for you, of intercourse with me. You might get the habit of naivetés.

F.—But what I have said of B. is true, and further I can substantiate it.

X.—I can see that I shall have to instruct you once more on a very simple matter. Suppose, then, for instance, you utter to anyone else (a member of your circle of acquaintanceship, your little world), what you have just said to me. What will happen ? They will be embarrassed, vexed and shocked if they are well-disposed. They will say : " What a *suspicious* cuss you are, aren't you ? " rather as they would speak to a dog.

F.—Suspicious ! I have good reason to be.

X.—Hush, hush ! “ Suspicious,” you understand, is the word the world has found to apply to those liable, through lack of self-control, to make a scandal. It is a word that bears with it an element of reproach. It is contrived by society as a punishment. It is not so severe as the label “ bore ” (which is administered for the crime of discussing things that people are too lazy or stupid to be attracted by), but still one that carries with it a social stigma.

F.—How true that is.

X.—Yes, I thought you would think that true.—I expect you are often a bore !—But to return to your “ suspiciousness.” You are supposed to take it for granted, you see, that everyone does you any slight damage they can. If they are competing with you in a closer sense than the general social one, they will, of course, damage you to the full extent of their ability. You are supposed, naturally, to be engaged in similar activities on your side. There are a multitude of more or less intense cross-currents as well : others battering subterraneously at you, and at each other. Your blow may arrive at the same moment in the bosom of some opponent as another blow posted from a source quite unknown to you, weeks before your own missive. He may stagger in consequence more than you expected. Under these circumstances, to suddenly announce, as you have to me, that someone is paying you undesirable attentions of the usual malignant type is equivalent to hitting a man in the eye in a drawing room, or assaulting a lady in public who would be delighted to accommodate you in the usual way and less publicly.

You see now more or less what you are doing ? Every civilized milieu is, and always has been, engaged perpetually in a sort of subconscious, sub-visible lawyer’s brawl. It is the devouring jungle driven underground, the instinct of bloody combat restricted to forensic weapons.

It is a nightmare, staged in a menagerie. The psycho-analysts with their jungle of the unconscious, and monsters tipsy with libido, have made a kind of Barnum and Bailey for the educated. But people do not apply this sensational picture as they could do with advantage.

Our social life is so automatic that the actors are often totally unaware of their participation in the activities about which we are talking. The world is in the strictest sense asleep, with rare intervals and spots of awareness. It is almost the sleep of the insect or animal world. No one would in the least mind, of course, being a *tiger* like Clemenceau. But what makes him or her highly indignant is to be unmasked as a *rat* or a *cat* ! It is as though you burst in upon a fashionable Beauty too early in the day.

Everyone is outwardly and for the world a charming fellow or woman, incapable of anything but the most generous and kind (always KIND, this is a key-word) behaviour. Everyone knows that in reality everybody is a shit, as much as he or she *dare* be. (And this “ courage ” involved again endears the thoroughly dirty dog to his fellows. It supplies the tincture of romance.) The reticence and powers of hypocrisy of our English race enhance this situation.

So, if you find yourself injured all of a sudden—find, that is, an unexpected pin sticking into your hide obtruded from the eminently respectable obscurity ; or a particularly vicious pinch administered ; examine the finger-print or abrasion : retaliate at the earliest opportunity. Twenty years hence, if you cannot before. But *never* declare yourself as you have declared yourself

to me. Such candour smacks of impotence. And, above all, it implies with a boring directness, the Truth that you need be no sage to know. Every kitchenmaid knows that all the people by whom she is surrounded are shits, and if it is to their interest or if they can, they will let her down, injure or rob her.

F.—You exaggerate the viciousness——

X.—And am *suspicious*! But I only exaggerate with *you*. I am never guilty of exaggeration at any other time. You must not give me away!

Scene : The same.

X.—Ha, ha! my dear F., I am “having some trouble” with Q.

F.—Hush!

X.—I know, but observe the way in which I deal with this matter. It will be a nice little object lesson for you!

F.—I am glad to find, all the same, that you are sufficiently human to have trouble with our fellow-animals at all.

X. (*sighing*).—It is as an animal that I resent “trouble.” However, here is the letter I have written to the cadaverous Q. :—

Dear Q.—Would you, as a proof of the friendship you profess, share a secret of yours with me?

(I may be asking the impossible, for you may not know your own secret).

O puzzling Q., you have made great speeches; you entertain with a benevolent haste all those approaches by societies and particulars, the entertaining of which would tend to make, as you see it, your importance grow. When the X society’s support, even, is in question, for Yorkshire, Cambridge, or the South Pole, with an unblushing speed you interpose yourself, and replying for others, speak as though, instead of being Q., as you really are, you all the while were X.

Now what I have asked myself is (you will forgive me) if you are *really* so young as to believe that such procedures are worth while? Or if you only pretend to be (compelled in some sense to throw out ballast by the shallowness of the milieu), and if in reality you know that they are not. That you are affecting to be living, in short, at a point of development that you have some time past?

Having asked my question, I will give you *my* answer first. I do not believe that the above is the answer. I believe in reality that you are only half conscious of what you do; just as the forger or murderer in most cases forges or murders as it were in his sleep. I believe in these little matters you are an automaton; and that the acts of the automaton have not the full consent of your mind. That is why, my dear Q., I continue to frequent you (only keeping an eye open, the while, for the slim, but rather harmlessly Dickens-like, rascality that is in hiding: for you are really a Dickens’ figure, are you not? a Boz?); and why I remain (has it ever occurred to you how this epistolary form implies “still am, in spite of everything”).

Your humble servant,

X.

F.—But, my dear X., you must be mistaken about Q. He is a most sympathetic, charming fellow.

X.—You have taken our last conversation to heart!

F.—Of course I have ; but I mean what I say about Q.

X.—So do I.

Scene : The same.

X.—What, you, here again so soon ? My dear old boy, you must be in love with your silhouette against that canvas, or you must be trying to form a habit, or break yourself of one about which you haven't told me.

F.—Our conversations, excellent X., attack all my habits : but since these do not disintegrate quickly enough, I return repeatedly to quicken the process.

X.—Well, what habit is it requires poisoning this morning ?

F.—I find that the habits you have scared away, have merely passed into their opposites, availing themselves of your reasoning, and stereotyping it. I am now going about seeing black where I formerly saw white, or *vice-versa*, and it is really much the same thing. Perhaps a satisfactory migration of your thought cannot be effected into me ?

X.—Ah, the reason for what you tell me may lie in the fact that I have been a little too brutal. Have I stamped things in too much, and buried them ? Let us see if we can disinter them.

I wish you had been with me yesterday. I saw many of our friends : and I can truly say that I found them all asleep, just as I had been describing them to you at our former meeting. I met P. and P.R. in the street. They literally seem to have grown into each other. P., the smaller, sharper one, seems to do the *carrying*. P.R. has the appearance of hanging, rather unreally, like a Signorelli figure in the picture of the damned, on his life's partner, with the superannuated languish of an old maid. I went to see Z. and C. They discharged a lot of putrid gossip into my ear ; or, since you have to grin while this is going on, into my mouth. For my contribution, I handed them a few of their own yarns back, which will be dished up at once as mine. In the evening I met Z.D.G. and D.T. in the restaurant. D.T. was already blind. So *he* was an unmixed automaton. The others were eating, making a few remarks they had made many times before, and preparing to go to a party they had been to many times before. But I need not enumerate my experiences : they are in a measure also yours. By the hard times, no doubt, everyone has been driven into any automatic unconscious life they can find ; for their vitality announces peremptorily that no more adventures, risks or efforts can be allowed. People, also, for this programme, are thrown outwards on each other more and more—driven out of themselves ; for in themselves imagination or effort awaits them.

That this has always characterised people, and especially civilized people, that it is, in fact, life, is indisputable. But I should be inclined to assert that our time could provide the student of such phenomena with as good a specimen as he could wish.

F.—You make me uncomfortable, X. I feel that my words, as I utter them, are issuing from a machine. I appear to myself a machine, whose destiny it is to ask questions.

X.—The only difference is that I am a machine that is constructed to provide you with answers.

I am alive, however. But I am beholden for life to machines that are asleep.

LETTRE DE PARIS.

LEWIS, vous me demandez d'être le porte-parole de mes amis parisiens et de faire connaître à vos lecteurs l'état actuel des arts plastiques en France. Je céderai bien volontiers à votre désir. Je ne sais si l'opinion anglaise peut se rendre un compte exact de la confusion qui règne ici, confusion dont la critique, oisive et inconsciente de ses devoirs porte la responsabilité. Les expositions d'art moderne organisées à Londres depuis la fin de la guerre vous ont-elles révélé le sens intime de la crise ? Je ne le pense pas. Le rôle néfaste qu'un Roger Fry joue chez vous, son activité débordante, son incontestable autorité et l'ascendant qu'il exerce sur le public londonien sont autant de causes de malentendu. La nature et le caractère des œuvres soumises aux amateurs anglais ne sauraient être mis en question. Mais les commentaires de presse qui accompagnent les expositions particulières et collectives travestissent de l'évolution historique de notre peinture. Nous sommes ici quelques uns qui croyons fermement au triomphe du cubisme. Ceux qui ont suivi le développement des arts plastiques depuis une dizaine d'années constatent l'influence des modes de figuration, dits cubistes, sur l'ensemble de la production artistique. Le prétendu mouvement de réaction, le prétendu retour aux formes traditionnelles ou classiques, est une vaine tentative des artistes de second plan qui ont tiré parti des premiers découverts de Picasso et de Braque mais qui n'ont pas eu la force de suivre ces pionniers dans leurs recherches ultérieures. La critique n'a pu qu'applaudir aux efforts de ces jeunes réacteurs et le public ignorant, paresseux et naïf a délibérément suivi dans leurs conclusions les esthéticiens hypocrites qui flattaient son goût de solutions provisoires. C'est à la faveur de la confusion, née de la guerre et certaines absences, qu'un groupe d'artistes intrigants et actifs est parvenu à répandre la légende de la mort définitive du cubisme et de l'éclosion d'un art apparemment plus conforme aux traditions nationales.

Ceux d'entre vos compatriotes qui connaissent Paris savent bien que nos musées d'art moderne, le Petit Palais et le Luxembourg ne contiennent pas assez d'œuvres représentatives pour permettre au spectateur de comprendre les principales tendances de l'art français, depuis l'impressionisme jusqu'à nos jours, et que la plupart des collections privées sont inaccessibles au public. Le voyageur peut visiter les galeries des marchands et les ateliers des artistes, s'il a le

désire de connaître les œuvres qui ont déterminé l'orientation présente de la peinture. Or depuis 1914 jusqu'en juillet 1921, date à laquelle furent dispersées à l'Hôtel Drouet les collections Uhde et Kahnweiler, il était matériellement impossible de voir les œuvres de début de Braque et de Picasso, œuvres qui forment la base initiale du mouvement contemporain. Une aussi longue dissimulation des tableaux nécessaires à l'intelligence de la peinture moderne, et l'absence de mémoire, dont témoignèrent les vieux critiques, l'accession au pouvoir d'une jeune génération d'écrivains primaires et manquant de connaissances professionnelles, enfin la prodigieuse faculté d'oubli d'un public de dilettantes, ont hâté la crise, dont l'art ne sortira qu'au prix de cruels sacrifices et d'exécutions peut-être capitales ! J'ai signalé au début de cet article le rôle du cubisme en tant qu'élément éducatif. La structure de la plupart des tableaux dus aux peintres qui répudient les méthodes cubistes décèle un esprit d'assimilation pour le moins singulier. La déformation dans le sens de la surface, c'est à dire la déformation tendant à ramener au même plan les parties de l'organisme plastique, pour ne citer que ces cas, organisée jadis selon les lois perspectives est une découverte cubiste, et les œuvres de Picasso et de Braque peintes en 1908 ou même plus tôt, constituent des témoignages suffisants pour confondre les défenseurs les plus hardis de la "jeune peinture." Mais l'influence du cubisme une fois admise, il reste à déterminer sa nature et à préciser l'attitude de la plupart des peintres-créateurs à l'endroit aux doctrines esthétiques dont ils furent les artisans. Il semble évident aux yeux de tous que l'art moyen, celui que représentent les Salons d'Automne et des Indépendants, est à l'état stationnaire depuis la fin de la guerre et que les peintres, dits constructeurs, assujettis à quelques pauvres formules, piétinent sur place, incapables qu'ils sont de pousser plus loin leurs investigations. Parmi les cubistes, je veux d'abord citer Picasso dont l'art abondant et varié se renouvelle sans cesse. Picasso dont la ligne de conduite en art a été irréprochable, et qui traita au cours de sa carrière tous les genres avec une égale maîtrise, résout les problèmes picturaux en ouvrier et en inventeur de formes. Les compositions apparemment naturalistes de Picasso comportent parfois des enseignements non moins précieux que ses figures abstraites. Son "échelle" (scale), ses rapports de dimensions et d'angles, ses mesures, sa mise en page, sont d'un artiste qui, ne pouvant se contenter du statu quo, recrée à son image un monde extérieur qui obéit à sa loi. Et même lorsqu'il commet des erreurs ou lorsqu'il fait des

concessions, cet artiste marque de la grippe de son génie, les dessins, portraits et maquettes de théâtre dont il est si prodigue. Picasso, dont les œuvres ont franchi les seuils des musées russes et allemands, n'a conquis en France qu'une élite peu nombreuse de connoisseurs et de snobs. La grande presse s'efforce de fausser le sens de son œuvre et les marchands hésitent à placer à leurs devantures ses tableaux cubistes. La part de Georges Braque dans le développement de la peinture moderne est considérable. Son art qui s'impose autant par sa qualité matérielle que par son esprit, révèle un grand peintre doublé d'un penseur capable non seulement de plier la nature aux exigences du tableau, mais aussi de fonder sur les bases nouvelles le processus de la création. La fameuse "poétique" de Braque eut une si vaste portée que les écrivains eux-mêmes en tirèrent parti. Le peintre, dit Braque, voit en formes et en couleurs et non en objets. Il ne représente point des pommes, des verres, des guitars, mais il particularise des formes géométriques. Au point de vue technique, Braque enrichi la peinture en y introduisant le métier manuel du peintre en bâtiment, avec tous les moyens raffinés qu'il comporte. Juan Gris que nous tenons pour un régulateur, a le goût des constructions logiques et bien établies, des formes précises des ensembles réguliers. Ses œuvres sont des organismes achevés que l'artiste livre au public en parfait état. Ce rare exécutant est doté d'une intelligence artistique assez clairvoyante pour cacher au spectateur les échafaudages savants de ses tableaux. Louis Marcoussis est un des seuls peintres qui aient compris l'importance des mesures dans l'œuvre peinte. Son art intime et discret acquiert du fait de son harmonie mathématique un singulier pouvoir émotif. Je terminerai, mon cher Wyndham Lewis, cette lettre en appelant l'attention de vos lecteurs sur le fait que la cubisme contrairement à ce que pense le public, est une esthétique, c'est à dire une conception du monde et non une technique, comme le néo-impressionisme. Cette conception, née d'un besoin de plénitude et d'équilibre est purement picturale. Elle tient compte des propriétés organisées de la surface à laquelle le peintre conserve son caractère spécifique. Le cubisme exclut donc l'emploi de certains moyens géométriques en faveur au temps de la Renaissance. Il substitue à l'art de représentation un art d'expression. Il libère le peintre du joug naturaliste, mais le prive en même temps de l'outillage perspectif qui permettait naguère même au plus médiocre d'exercer leur profession avec un semblant de succès.

Waldemar George.

BESTRE.

AS I walked along the quay at Kermanac, there was a pretty footfall in my rear. Turning my head, I found an athletic French woman, about forty years old, of the bourgeois class, looking at me.

The crocket-like floral postiches on the ridges of her head-gear looked crisped down in a threatening way: her nodular pink veil was an apoplectic gristle round her stormy brow: steam came out of her lips upon the harsh white atmosphere. Her eyes were dark, and the contiguous colour of her cheeks of a redness quasi-venetian, with something like the feminine colouring of battle. This was surely a feline battle-mask, then; but in such a pacific and slumbrous spot I thought it an anomalous ornament.

My dented bidon of a hat—cantankerous beard—Austrian boots, the soles like the rind of a thin melon slice, the uppers in stark calcinous segments; my cassock-like blue broad-cloth coat (why was I like this?—the habits of needy travel grew this composite shell), this uncouthness might have raised in her the question of defiance and offence. I glided swiftly along on my centipedal boots, dragging my eye upon the rough walls of the houses to my right like a listless cane. Low houses faced the small vasey port. It was there I saw Bestre.

This is how I became aware of Bestre.

The detritus of some weeks' hurried experience was being dealt with in my mind, on this crystalline, extremely cold, walk, through Kermanac to Rot; and was being established in orderly heaps. At work in my untidy hive, I was alone: the atmosphere of the workshop dammed me in. That I moved forward was no more strange than if a carpenter's shop or chemist's laboratory, installed in a boat, should move forward on the tide of a stream. Now, what seemed to happen was that, as I bent over my work, an odiously grinning face peered in at my window. The impression of an intrusion was so strong, that I did not even realise at first that it was I who was the intruder. That the window was not *my* window, and that the face was not peering in but *out*: that, in fact, it was I myself who was guilty of peering into somebody else's window: this was hidden from me in the first moment of consciousness about the odious brown person of Bestre. It is a wonder that the curse did not at once fall from me on this detestable inquisitive head. What I did do was to pull up in my automatic progress, and, instead of passing on, to

continue to stare in at Bestre's kitchen window, and scowl at Bestre's sienna-coloured gourd of a head.

Bestre in his turn was nonplussed. He knew that someone was looking in at his kitchen window all right : he had expected someone to do so, someone who in fact had contracted the habit of doing that. But he had mistaken my steps for this other person's ; and the appearance of my face was in a measure as disturbing to him, as his had been to me. My information on these points afterwards became complete. With a flexible imbrication reminiscent of a shutter-lipped ape, a bud of tongue still showing, he shot the latch of his upper lip down in front of the nether one, and depressed the interior extremities of his eyebrows sharply from their quizzing perch—only this monkey-on-a-stick mechanical pull—down the face's centre. At the same time, his arms still folded like bulky lizards, blue tattoo on brown ground, upon the escarpment of his vesicular middle, not a hair or muscle moving, he made a quick, slight motion to me with one hand to get out of the picture without speaking—to efface myself. It was the gesture of a theatrical French sportsman. I was in the line of fire. I moved on : a couple of steps did it. That lady was twenty yards distant. But nowhere anything apparently related to Bestre's gestures. " Pension de Famille ? " What prices ?—and how charmingly placed. I passed along the side of Bestre's house to the principal door. I concluded that this entrance was really disused, although more imposing. So emerging on the quay once more, and turning along the front of the house, I again discovered myself in contact with Bestre. He was facing towards me, and down the quay, still as before and the attitude so much a replica as to make it seem a plagiarism of his kitchen piece : only now his head was on one side, a verminous grin had dispersed the equally unpleasant entity of his shut mouth. The new facial arrangement and angle for the head imposed on what seemed his stock pose for the body, must mean : " Am I not rather smart ? Not just a little bit smart ? Don't you think ? A little, you will concede ? You did not expect that, did you ? That was a nasty jar for you, was it not ? Ha ! my lapin, that was unexpected, that is plain ! Did you think you would find Bestre asleep ? He is always awake ! He watched you being born, and has watched you ever since. Don't be too sure that he did not play some part in planting the little seed from which you grew into such a big, fine (many withering exclamation marks) boy (or girl). He will be in at your finish too. But he is in no hurry about that. He is never

in a hurry ! He bides his time. Meanwhile he laughs at you. He finds you a little funny. That's right ! Yes ! I am still looking ! ”

His very large eyeballs, the small saffron ocellation in their centre, the tiny spot through which light entered the obese wilderness of his body ; his bronzed, bovine arms, swollen handles for a variety of indolent little ingenuities ; his inflated digestive case, lent their combined expressiveness to say these things ; with every tart and biting condiment that eye-fluid, flaunting of fatness (the well-filled !), the insult of the comic, implications of indecency, could provide. Every variety of bottom-tapping resounded from his dumb bulk. His tongue stuck out, his lips eructated with the incredible indecorum that appears to be the monopoly of liquids, his brown arms were for the moment genitals, snakes in one massive twist beneath his mamillary slabs, gently riding on a pancreatic swell, each hair on his oil-bearing skin contributing its message of porcine affront.

Taken fairly in the chest by this magnetic attack, I wavered. Turning the house corner it was like confronting a hard meaty gust. But I perceived that the central gyroduct passed a few feet clear of me. Turning my back, arching it a little, perhaps, I was just in time to receive on the boko a parting volley from the female figure of the obscure encounter, before she disappeared behind a rock which brought Kermanac to a close on this side of the port. She was evidently replying to Bestre. It was the rash grating philippic of a battered cat, limping into safety. At the moment that she vanished behind the boulder, Bestre must have vanished too, for a moment later the quay was empty. On reaching the door into which he had sunk, plump and slick as into a stage trap, there he was inside—this grease-bred old mammifer—his tufted vertex charging about the plank ceiling—generally ricochetting like a dripping sturgeon in a boat's bottom—arms warm brown, ju-jitsu of his guts, tan canvas shoes and trousers rippling in ribbed planes as he darted about—with a filthy snicker for the scuttling female, and a stark cock of the eye for an unknown figure miles to his right : he filled this short tunnel with clever parabolas and vortices, little neat stutterings of triumphs, goggle-eyed hypnotisms, in retrospect, for his hearers.

“ T'as vu ? T'as vu ? Je l'ai fiché c'es'qu'elle n'attendait pas ! Ah, la rosse ! Qu'elle aille raconter ça à son crapule de mari. Si, si, s'il vient ici, tu sais—! ”

His head nodded up and down in batches of blood-curdling affirmations ; his hand, pudgy hieratic disk, tapped the air gently, then sawed tenderly up and down.

Bestre, on catching sight of me, hailed me as a witness. "Tiens ! Ce monsieur peut vous le dire : il était là. Il m'a vu là didans qui l'attendait !"

I bore witness to the subtleties of his warlike ambush. I told his sister and two boarders that I had seldom been privy to such a rich encounter. They squinted at me, and at each other, dragging their eyes off with slow tosses of the head. I took rooms in this house, and was constantly entertained for a week.

Before attempting to discover the significance of Bestre's proceedings when I clattered into the silken zone of his hostilities, I settled down in his house ; watched him idly, from both my windows—cleaning his gun in the back yard—rather shyly sucking up to a fisherman on the quay. I went into his kitchen and his shed and watched him. I realised as little as he did that I was patting and prodding a subject of these stories. There was no intention in these stoppages on my zigzag trek across Western France of taking a human species, as an entomologist would take a *Distoma* or a *Narbonne Lycosa*, to study. It was at the end of a few months' roaming in the country that I saw I had been a good deal in contact with a tribe, some more and some less generic. It seemed to me an amusing labour to gather some of these individuals in retrospect and group them under their function, to which all in some diverting way were attached. My stoppage at Kermanac, for example, was because Bestre was a little excitement. I had never seen brown flesh put to those uses. And the situation of his boarding-house would allow of unlimited pococurantism, idling and eating : the small cliffs of the scurfy little port, as well, its desertion and queer train of life, reaching a system of dreams I had considered effaced. But all the same I went laughing after Bestre, tapping him, setting traps for the game that he decidedly contained for my curiosity. So it was almost as though Fabre could have established himself within the masonries of the bee, and lived on its honey, while investigating for the human species : or stretched himself on a bed of raphia and pebbles at the bottom of the *Lycosa's* pit, and lived on flies and locusts. I lay on Bestre's billowy beds, fished from his boat ; he brought me birds and beasts that he had chased and killed. It was an idyllic life of the calmest adventure. We were the best of friends : he thought I slapped him because contact with his fat gladdened me ; and to establish contact with the feminine vein in his brown-coated ducts and muscles. Also he was Bestre, and it must be nice to pat and buffet him as it would be to do that with a dreadful lion.

He offered himself, sometimes wincing coquettishly, occasionally rolling his eyes a little, as the lion might do to remind you of your fear, and heighten the luxurious privilege.

Bestre's boarding-house is only open from June to October: the winter months he passes in hunting and trapping. He is a stranger to Kermanac, a Boullonnais, and at constant feud with the natives. For some generations his family have been strangers where they lived; and he carries on his face the mark of an origin even more distant than Picardy. His great-grandfather came into France from the Peninsula, with the armies of Napoleon. Possibly his alertness, combativeness and timidity are the result of these exilings and difficult adjustments to new surroundings, working in his blood, and in his own history.

He is a large, tall man, corpulent and ox-like: you can see by his movements that the slow aggrandisement of his stomach has hardly been noticed by him. It is still compact with the rest of his body, and he is as nimble as a flea. It has been for him like the speculations of a minister, enriching himself under the nose of the Pasha: Bestre's kingly indifference can be accounted for by the many delights and benefits procured through this subtle misappropriation of the general resources of the body. Sunburnt, with large yellow-white moustache, little eyes protruding with the cute strenuosity already noticed, when he meets anyone for the first time his mouth stops open, a cigarette-end adhering to the lower lip. He will assume an expression of expectancy, and repressed amusement, like a man accustomed to nonplussing: the expression the company wears in those games of divination when they have made the choice of an object, and he whose task it is to guess its nature is called in, and commences the cross-examination. Bestre is jocose: he will beset you with mocking thoughts as the man is danced round in a game of blind man's buff. He may have regarded my taps as a myopic clutch at his illusive person. He gazes at a new acquaintance as though this poor man, without guessing it, were entering a world of astonishing things! A would-be boarder arrives and asks him if he has a room with two beds. Bestre fixes him steadily for twenty seconds with an amused yellow eye. Without uttering a word, he then leads the way to a neighbouring door, lets the visitor pass into the room, stands watching him with the expression of a conjurer who has just drawn a curtain aside and revealed to the stupefied audience a horse and cart, or a life-size portrait of Mr. H. G. Wells, where a moment ago there was nothing.

Suppose the following thing happened. A madman, who believes himself a hen, escapes from Charenton, and gets, somehow or another, as far as Finisterre. He turns up at Kermanac, knocks at Bestre's door and asks him with a perfect stereotyped courtesy for a large, airy room, with a comfortable perch to roost on, and a little straw in the corner where he might sit. Bestre a few days before has been visited by the very idea of arranging such a room : all is ready. He conducts his demented client to it. Now his manner with his everyday client would be thoroughly appropriate under these circumstances. They are carefully suited to a very weak-minded and whimsical visitor indeed.

Bestre has another group of tricks, pertaining directly to the commerce of his hospitable trade. When a customer is confessing in the fullest way his paraesthesias, allowing this new host an engaging glimpse of his nastiest propriums and kinks, Bestre behaves, with unconscious logic, as though a secret of the most disreputable nature were being imparted to him. Were, in fact, the requirements of a vice being enumerated, he could not display more plainly the qualms caused by his role of accessory. He will lower his voice, whisper in the client's ear ; before doing so glance over his shoulder apprehensively two or three times, and push his guest roughly into the darkest corner of the passage or kitchen. It is his perfect understanding—is he not the only man that does, at once, forestall your eager whim : there is something of the fortune-teller in him—that produces the air of mystery. For his information is not always of the nicest, is it ? He must know more about you than I daresay you would like many people to know. And Bestre will in his turn mention certain little delicacies that he, Bestre, will see that you have, and that the other guests will not share with you. So there you are committed at the start to a subtle collusion. But Bestre means it. Everyone he sees for the first time he is thrilled about, until they have got used to him. He would give you anything while he is still strange to you. But you see the interest die down in his eyes, at the end of twenty-four hours, whether you have assimilated him or not. He only gives you about a day for your meal. He then assumes that you have finished him, and he feels chilled by your scheduled disillusion. A fresh face and an enemy he depends on for that “ new ” feeling—or what can we call this firework that he sends up for the stranger, that he enjoys so much himself—or this rare bottle he can only open when hospitality compels—his own blood ?

I had arrived at the master-moment of one of Bestre's campaigns. These were long and bitter affairs. But they consisted almost entirely of dumb show. The few words that passed were generally misleading. A vast deal of talking went on in the different camps. But a dead and pulverising silence reigned on the field of battle, with few exceptions.

It was a matter of who could be most silent and move least : it was a stark stand-up fight between one personality and another, unaided by adventitious muscle or tongue. It was more like phases of a combat or courtship in the insect-world. The Eye was really Bestre's weapon : the ammunition with which he loaded it was drawn from all the most skunk-like provender, the most ugly mucins, fungoid glands, of his physique. Excrement as well as sputum would be shot from this luminous hole, with the same certainty in its unsavoury appulsion. Every resource of metonymy, bloody mind transfusion or irony were also his. What he selected as an arm in his duels, then, was the Eye. As he was always the offended party he considered that he had this choice. I traced the predilection for this weapon and method to a very fiery source—to the land of his ancestry—Spain. How had the knife dropped out of his outfit ? Who can tell ? But he retained the mirada whole and entire enough to please anyone, all the more active for the absence of the dagger. I pretend that Bestre behaved as he did directly because his sweet forbears had to rely so much on the furious languishing and jolly conversational properties of their eyes to pull off life's business at all. The Spanish beauty imprisoned behind her casement can only roll her eyes at her lover in the street below. The result of these and similar Eastern restraints develops the eye almost out of recognition. Bestre in his kitchen, behind his casement, was unconsciously employing this gift from his half-African past. And it is not even the unsupported female side of Bestre. For the lover in the street as well must keep his eye in constant training to bear out the furibond jugular drops, the mettlesome stamping, of the guitar. And all the haughty chevaleresque habits of this bellicose race have substituted the eye for the mouth in a hundred ways. The Grandee's eye is terrible, and at his best is he not speechless with pride ? Eyes, eyes : for defiance, for shrivelling subordinates, for courtesy, for love. A "Spanish" eye might be used as we say "Toledo blade." There, anyway, is my argument, I place on the one side Bestre's eye : on the other I isolate the Iberian eye. Bestre's grandfather, we know, was a Castilian. To show how he was beholden to this extraction,

and again how the blood clung to him, Bestre was in no way grasping. It went so far that he was noticeably careless about money. This, in France, could not be accounted for in any other way.

Bestre's quarrels turned up as regularly as work for a good shoemaker. Antagonism after antagonism flushed forth: became more acute through several weeks: detonated in the dumb pyrotechnic I have described: then wore itself out with its very exhausting and exacting violence. At the passing of an enemy Bestre will pull up his blind with a snap. There he is, with his insult stewing lusciously in his yellow sweat. The eyes fix on the enemy, on his weakest spot, and do their work. He has the anatomical instinct of the hymenopter for his prey's most morbid spot; for an old wound; for a lurking vanity. He goes into the other's eye, seeks it, and strikes. On a physical blemish he turns a scornful and careless rain like a garden hose. If the deep vanity is on the wearer's back, or in his walk or gaze, he sluices it with an abundance you would not expect his small eyes to be capable of delivering. But the *mise-en-scene* for his successes is always the same.

Bestre is *discovered* somewhere, behind a blind, in a doorway, beside a rock, when least expected. He regards the material world as so many ambushes for his body.

Then the key principle of his strategy is provocation. The enemy must be exasperated to the point at which it is difficult for him to keep his hands off his aggressor. The desire to administer the blow is as painful as a blow received. That the blow should be taken back into the enemy's own bosom, and that he should be stifled by his own oath—that Bestre regards as so many blows, and so much abuse, of *his*, Bestre's, although he has never so much as taken his hands out of his pockets, or opened his mouth.

His immediate neighbours on the quay afford him a constant war-food. I have seen him slipping out in the evening and depositing refuse in front of his neighbour's house. I have seen a woman screeching at him in pidgin French from a window of the *débit* two doors off, while he pared his nails a yard from his own front door. This was to show his endurance. The subtle notoriety, too, of his person is dear to him. But local functionaries and fishermen are not his only fare. During summer, time hangs heavy with the visitor from Paris. When the first great ennui comes upon him, he wanders about desperately, and his eye in due course falls on Bestre. It depends how busy Bestre is at the moment. But often enough

he will take on the visitor in his canine way. The visitor shivers, opens his eyes, bristles at the quizzing pursuit of Bestre's œillade: the remainder of his holiday flies in a round of singular plots, passionate conversations and prodigious encounters with this born broiler.

Now a well-known painter and his family, who rented a house in the neighbourhood, were, it seemed, particularly responsive to Bestre. I could not, at the bottom of it, find any cause for his quarrel. The most insignificant pretext was absent. The pompous, peppery Paris salon artist, and this Boulogne-bred innkeeper inhabited the same village and grew larger and larger in each other's eyes at a certain moment, in this bare Breton wild. As Bestre swelled and swelled for the painter, he was seen to be the possessor of some insult incarnate that was an intolerable element in so lonely a place. War was inevitable. Bestre saw himself growing and growing, with the glee of battle in his heart, and the flicker of budding effront in his little eye. He did nothing to arrest this alarming aggrandisement. Pretexts could have been found. But they were dispensed with by mutual consent. This is how I reconstructed the obscure and early phases of that history. What is certain is that there had been much eye-play on the quay between Monsieur Riviere and Monsieur Bestre. And the scene that I had taken part in was the culmination of a rather humiliating phase in the annals of Bestre's campaigns.

The distinguished painter's wife had contracted the habit of passing Bestre's kitchen window of a morning when Mademoiselle Marie was alone there—gazing glassily in, but never looking at Mademoiselle Marie. This had such a depressing effect on Bestre's old sister, that it reduced her vitality considerably, and in the end brought on diarrhœa. Why did Bestre permit the war to be brought into his own camp with such impunity? The only reason that I could discover for this was that the attacks were of very irregular timing, and that he had been out fishing in one or two cases when it had occurred. But on the penultimate occasion Madame Riviere had practically finished off the last surviving female of Bestre's notable stock. As usual she had looked into the kitchen; but this time *at* Mademoiselle Marie, and in such a way as practically to curl her up on the floor. Bestre's sister had none of her brother's ferocity, and in every way departed considerably from his type, except in a mild and sentimental imitation of his colouring. The distinguished painter's wife on the other hand had a touch of Bestre

about her. It was because Bestre did not have it all his own way, and recognized, probably with misgiving, the redoubtable and Bestre-like quality of his enemy, that he resorted to such extreme measures as I suspect him of employing to rout her on the ground she had chosen—his kitchen.

On that morning when I drifted into the picture what happened to induce such a disarray in the female? Bestre was lying in wait for her. What means did he employ during the second or two that she would take in passing his kitchen window, to bring her to her knees? In principle, as I have said, Bestre sacrificed the claims any individual portion of his anatomy might have to independent expressiveness to a tyrannical appropriation of all this varied battery of bestial significance by his eye. Had he any theory, however, that certain occasions warranted, or required, the auxiliary offices of units of the otherwise subordinated mass? Can the sex of his assailant give us a clue? I am convinced in my own mind that another agent was called in on this occasion. I am certain that he struck the death-blow with another engine than his eye. I believe that the most savage and obnoxious means of affront were employed to cope with the distinguished painter's wife.

Monsieur Riviere, with his painting-pack and campstool, came along the quay shortly afterwards, going in the same direction as his wife. Bestre was at his door; and he came in later and let us know how he had behaved.

"I wasn't such a fool as to insult him, there were witnesses: let him do that. But if I come upon him in one of those lanes at the back there, you know——! I was standing at my door; he came along and looked at my house and scanned my windows" (this is equivalent in Bestre warfare to a bombardment). "As he passed I did not move. I thought to myself 'Hurry home, old fellow, and ask Madame what she has seen during her little walk!' I looked him in the white of the eyes: he thought I'd lower mine; he doesn't know me. And, after all, what is he, though he's got the Riband of the Legion of Honour? I don't carry *my* decorations on my coat! I have mine marked on my body. Yes, I fought in 1870; did I ever show you what I've got here? No; I'm going to show you." He had shown all this before, but my presence encouraged a repetition of former successes. So while he was speaking he jumped up, quickly undid his shirt, bared his chest and stomach, and pointed to something beneath his arm. Then, rapidly rolling

up his sleeve, he pointed to a cicatrice rather like a vaccination mark, but larger. While showing his scars he slaps his body, with a sort of sneering rattle or chuckle between his words, his eyes protruding more than usual. His customary wooden expression is disintegrated : this compound of a constant foreboded reflection of the expression of astonishment your face will acquire when you learn of his wisdom, valour, or wit : the slightest shade of sneering triumph : and a touch of calm relish at your wonder. Or he seems teaching you by his staring grimace the amazement you should feel ; and his grimace gathers force and blooms as the full sense of what you are witnessing, hearing, bursts upon you, while your gaping face conforms more and more to Bestre's prefiguring mask.

As to his battles, Bestre is profoundly unaware of what strange category he has got himself into. The principles of his strategy are possibly the possession of his libido, but most certainly not that of the bulky and surface citizen, Bestre. On the contrary, he considers himself on the verge of a death struggle at any moment when in the presence of one of his enemies.

Like all people who spend their lives talking about their deeds, he presents a very particular aspect in the moment of action. When discovered in the thick of one of his dumb battles, he has the air of a fine company promoter, cornered, trying to corrupt some sombre fact into shielding for an hour his unwieldy fiction, until some fresh wangle can retrieve it. Or he will display a great empirical expertness in reality, without being altogether at home in it.

Bestre in the moment of action feels as though he were already talking. His action has the exaggerated character of his speech, only oddly curbed by the exigencies of reality. In his moments of most violent action he retains something of his dumb-passivity. He never seems quite entering into reality, but observing it. He is looking at the reality with a professional eye, so to speak : with a professional liar's.

I have noticed that the more cramped and meagre his action has been, the more exuberant his account of the affair is afterwards. The more restrictions reality has put on him, the more unbridled is his gusto as historian of his deeds, immediately afterwards.

Then he has the common impulse to avenge that self that has been perishing under the famine and knout of a bad reality, by glorifying and surfeiting it on its return to the imagination.

Wyndham Lewis.



i.

Dismorr.



ii.

Lipschitz.



Room No. 59.

Wyndham Lewis.



Wyndham Lewis.

Red and Black Olympus.



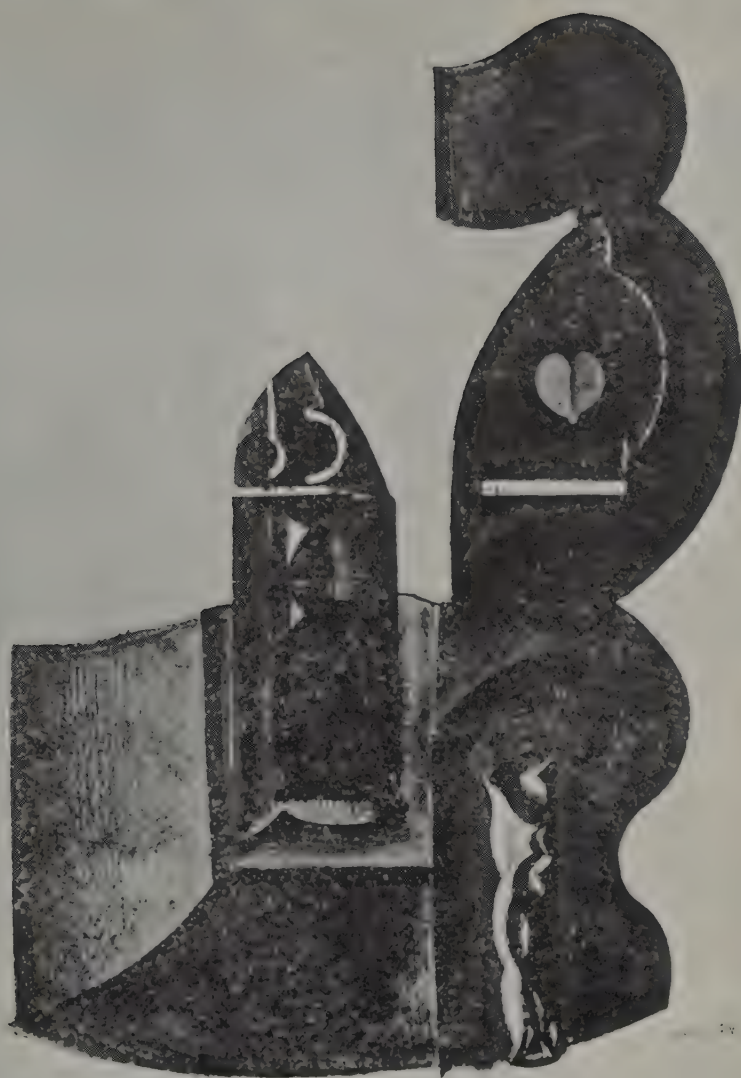
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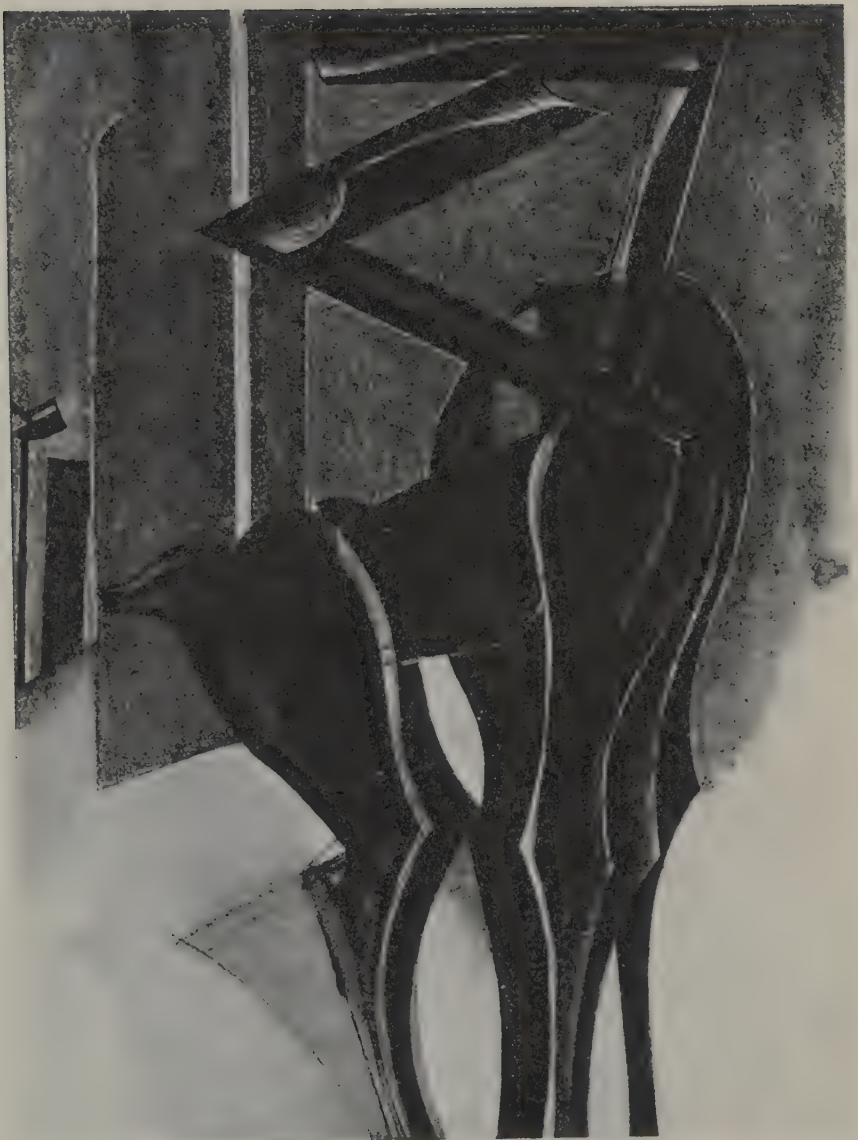
Wyndham Lewis.



Girl Reading.

Wyndham Lewis.







ix.

Dobson.



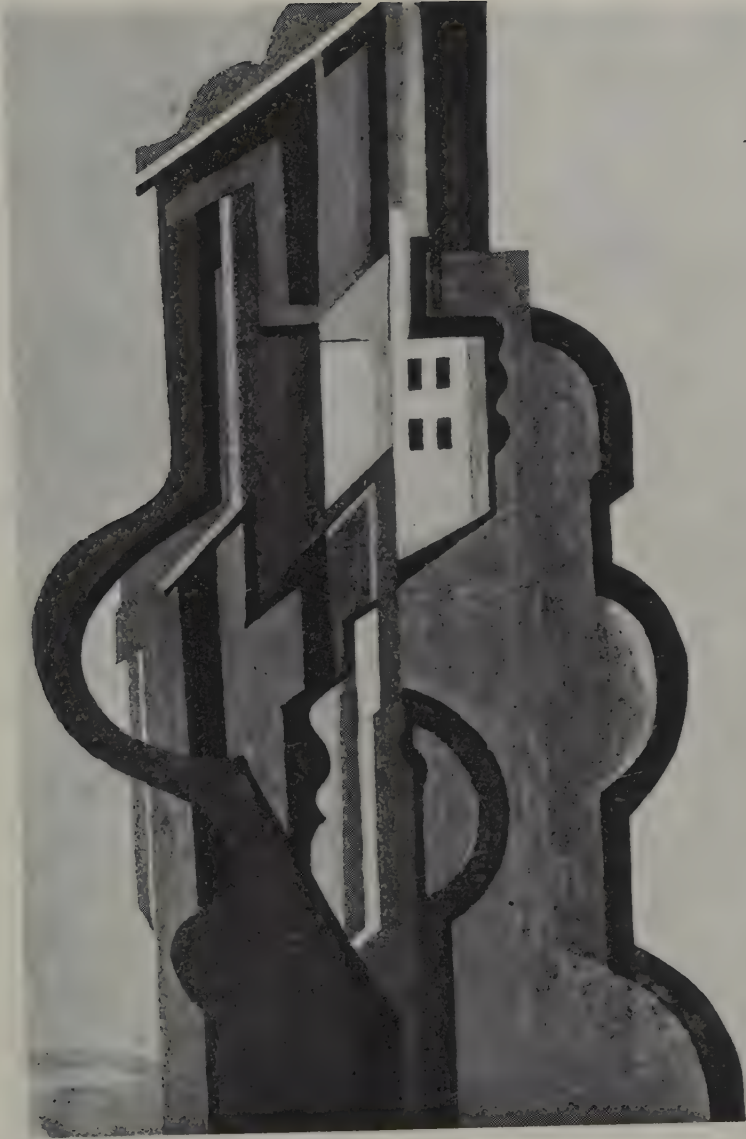
x. Family.

Dobson.



Cornish Arabesque.

Etchells.



xii.

Etchells.



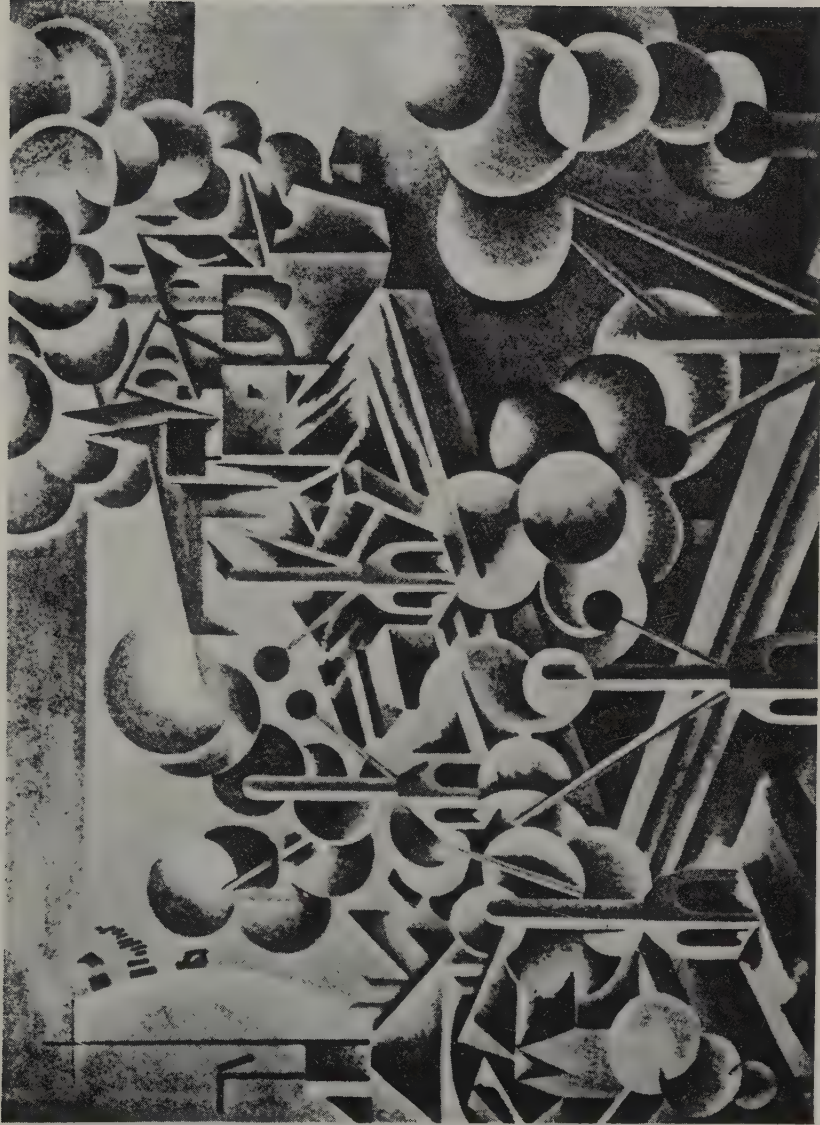
Etchells.

Porthleven.



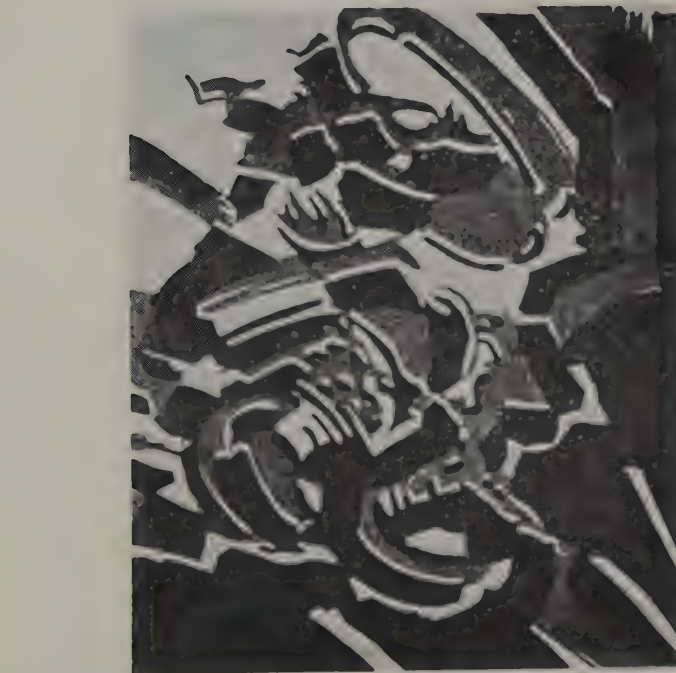
Wadsworth.

Portland.



Wadsworth.

Port.



Wadsworth.

Mudros.



Wadsworth.

Mudros.



xvii.

Mudros.

Wadsworth.

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